CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY NEW MUSLIM REVERTS IN GUYANA

For The Degree Of The Master Of Arts In Islamic Studies

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Challenges Encountered by New Muslim Reverts in Guyana

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates individuals who have recently adopted Islam in Guyana. It aims to establish the struggles they encounter in the initial stage of their journey. The research categorizes the challenges into four categories: psychological, social, cultural, and religious. Highlighting the hurdles that prevent new Muslims from obtaining a seamless transition from one lifestyle to another would assist fellow Muslims, leaders of masjids, and Islamic organizations to understand the challenges from reverts' perspectives. Consequently, the tension and stress that new reverts experience after embracing Islam could be alleviated by helping to supply sufficient support systems for their integration.

The methodology used for gathering data utilized a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques. The quantitative procedure involved surveys, which collected information from 77 participants across Guyana, while interviews were conducted with 11 reverts as part of the qualitative process. This hybrid approach facilitated the analysis of measurable data and personal narratives, which highlighted individual and collective challenges.

The findings revealed that while spiritual conviction among reverts remained strong, several reverts experienced physical and psychological difficulties caused by strained family relationships and cultural dissimilarity. Additionally, they encountered hurdles in learning Arabic and adhering to Islamic practices due to a lack of sufficient mentorship and communal support. Other challenging issues were identified as social marginalization, especially from non-Muslim relatives and acquaintances, along with the perception of being scrutinized for identifying as a Muslim.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to an under-researched demographic within the Caribbean context. By presenting the voices and concerns of new Muslims in Guyana, this research not only fills a critical gap in Islamic and sociocultural scholarship but also provides practical recommendations for developing inclusive and empathetic strategies to support reverts. The findings aim to encourage policymakers, religious institutions, and

Muslim communities to be more responsive, understanding, and proactive in facilitating smoother transitions for new Muslims.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research paper [Challenges Encountered by New Muslim Reverts in Guyana] comprises solely my original work and has been submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for a Master of Arts in the field of Islamic Studies at the International Open University. This paper has not been submitted previously for any academic or professional qualification. The work of others in this research is clearly acknowledged according to scholarly conventions.

Signed:

Bibi Rehana Mohamed

Date: 1 July 2025

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Glossary

'Abāya: A long flowing garment worn by Muslim women.

Allāh: The Arabic term referring to the only God.

Da'wah: Methods employ to invite people to Islam.

Fitrah: Human's natural inclination to acknowledge God and all that is good.

Hadīth: Recordings of the Prophet Muhammad's sayings, actions and approvals (peace and blessings be upon him).

Hajj: Sacred pilgrimage to the holy city of Makkah

Halāl: Permissible in Islam.

Hijāb: Head and body cover worn by Muslim women.

Imaam: The religious leader of the masjid.

Kufi: Muslim men's headwear

Makkah: The holiest city in Arabia, where Muslims perform the yearly pilgrimage.

Masjid: Muslim's place of worship

Ramadān: The 9th month of the Islamic calendar in which Muslims are commanded to fast.

Salāh: Muslim's prescribed way of praying

Shahādah: The Muslim testimony of faith, declaring that there is no God to be worshipped except Allāh and that the final Prophet and Messenger is Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Traditional Muslims: Muslims who were born into the religion of Islam.

Thoub: A long gown worn by Muslim men

Ummah: Unified Muslim nation

CHAPTER I

Introduction

1.1 Background Information

1.1.1 The Implication and Process of Reverting to Islam

The declaration of committing to Islam may occur suddenly or gradually, yet the experience of living as a new Muslim constitutes a journey that progresses through various phases and numerous decisions (Lang, 1995; van Nieuwkerk, 2006; Roald, 2006; Zebiri, 2008). Berger and Luckmann (1971, as cited in Kose, 1994) assert that "a conversion experience is nothing much. The real thing is to be able to keep on taking it seriously, to retain a sense of its plausibility" (p. 140).

Reverting or converting in this paper symbolizes transforming from specific theological doctrines or secular perspectives to monotheistic principles. Acknowledging the supremacy of one divine entity mandates the exclusive worship of Him alone, devoid of any associates. This phenomenon of reversion commenced during the era of Prophet Noah (Nuh—peace be upon him). Subsequently, it persisted with all the other Prophets and Messengers as humanity began venerating entities other than the One Supreme Deity (Ibn Kathir, 2023). The last and final Prophet, Muhammad (peace be upon him), proclaimed the same message. He urged his people to embrace Islam. As individuals accepted his doctrine and returned to Islam, they encountered considerable hurdles, since their new faith required them to surrender to the worship of a singular God and renounce idolatry and practices contrary to the teachings of Islam (Najeebabadi, 2001).

Allāh states:

"Do people think once they say: "We believe," that they will be left without being put to the test? We certainly tested those before them. And ˹in this way˺ Allāh will clearly distinguish between those who are truthful and those who are liars." (Qurān: 29:2-3)

Individuals are drawn to Islam for a multitude of reasons. Several reverts are attracted to Islam through the conviction that it represents the truth. They pursue a spiritual elevation and seek intellectual satisfaction. Others embrace Islam for pragmatic reasons, such as striving for social, economic, or political advantages (Coope, 1993; Uchendu, 2010; Galonnier, 2021; Haddad et al., 2006; Lang, 1995; Brice, 2010). For instance, Galonnier reveals that in France and the United States, the acceptance of Islam may originate from several factors, including "a spiritual quest, a mystical revelation, political reflection, travel to a Muslim country, networks of friends, [and] marriage" (2021, p. 2). The transitional process of reversion transcends the level of cognition. It involves modifying reverts' theological principles, personal values, and social identity. This journey entails adjusting to unfamiliar religious customs, assimilating into new religious groups, and managing the cultural and emotional obstacles associated with such a profound life alteration (Kose, 1994).

It should be noted that this study uses the word 'revert' instead of 'convert.' The term 'convert' or 'conversion' originated from Latin and was traditionally used by Christians when one entered the religion of Christianity. Conversely, the entrance into Islam may be described as 'becoming a Muslim,' 'embracing Islam,' or 'taking the Shahada.' These statements convey the act of submitting to one Supreme Deity while abstaining from venerating anything other than Him (Knutson & Ellis, 2021). Lahmar points out that the participants in his pilot survey objected to the term 'converts,' as they preferred to be characterized as 'reverts.' The reason for their objection stems from the fact that "they considered themselves born monotheists and, therefore, are 'reverts' to the belief of the One only God after they have lost it through the social environment in which they developed their concepts about life" (2018, p. 6).

Additionally, the term 'revert' for Muslims signifies the return to the original state in which humanity was born. This state reflects the fundamental essence of man's spiritual nature, which corresponds to the pure state of all created entities. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) asserts:

"There is no child who is not born in a state of Fitrah; then his parents make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian…" (Sahih Muslim, Vol. 7, Hadith 6755)

Allāh mentions:

"Adhere exclusively and sincerely to the true faith of monotheism, the natural disposition that Allāh instilled in humankind." (Qurān: 30:30)

As-Sa'di explains the phrase "natural disposition." He affirms that Allāh, the Creator, has implanted in the minds of men the inclination toward good and the aversion against evil. This state represents the inherent characteristics of human nature. Correspondingly, it is embedded in man's innate nature to acknowledge the universal laws established by the Almighty (2018).

Furthermore, regardless of the rationale for embracing Islam, it is manifested in Islamic doctrines that upon accepting the Shahada (testimony of Islamic faith), all previous sins are obliterated, restoring a person to the unblemished state in which they were born.

Allāh states:

Say: "Oh, My slaves who have transgressed against themselves (by committing evil deeds and sins)! Despair not of the Mercy of Allāh, verily, Allāh forgives all sins. Truly, He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (Qurān: 39:53)

'Amr ibn al 'Aas, who was a polytheist and idol worshipper, reports that: "When Allāh put the love of Islam into my heart, I came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) to pledge my allegiance to him. He stretched out his hand towards me, but I said, 'I will not pledge allegiance to you, O Messenger of Allāh, until you forgive me my previous sins.' The Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) said to me, 'O 'Amr, do you not know that Islam wipes out whatever sins came before it?" (Sahih Muslim, Vol. 1, Hadith 121)

Thus, the first step in embracing Islam as one's religion necessitates declaring a statement called the Shahada. This affirmation is recited with sincerity after the pillars and beliefs of Islam have been explained. The Shahada, which represents the primary pillar of Islam, declares that there is no other deity worthy of worship except Allāh and that Muhammad is the final Prophet and Messenger to humanity.

1.1.2 Guyana and Guyanese

Guyana, a small country with a population of approximately 790,000 inhabitants, is located in northern South America, and it shares borders with Venezuela, Suriname, Brazil, and the Atlantic Ocean (Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission, n.d.). Guyana's indigenous people are known as the Amerindians. Subsequently, the nation was inhabited by a significant influx of immigrants from Africa and India during the colonial period. As a result, the now ethnically diverse population represents a heterogeneous heritage (Chickrie, 2007). Religion and culture in Guyana are diverse, with Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam being the three predominant faiths in the country (U.S. Department of State, 2022).

Islam is noted as the least dominant of the three religions, with Muslims constituting 7–10% of the total population, according to the latest census carried out by the U.S. Department of State (2022). Previous records estimated that Muslims constitute 15% of the population (Chickrie, 2007). Hence, in the past decade, data indicated that the Muslim population in Guyana had decreased significantly. Nevertheless, the history and heritage of Guyanese Muslims constitute an integral part of Guyana's cultural structure. As such, Islam, being a primary religion in Guyana, was first introduced to this land in the mid-17th century via the African immigrants, followed by the East Indians in the 19th century (Ishmael, 2013).

1.1.3 The History of Islam in Guyana

Guyana was colonized by the Dutch and then the British in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, respectively (Lake Mainstay Resort, n.d.). The Dutch first brought Africans from West Africa as enslaved people to work on sugarcane plantations in Guyana. Subsequently, the British emulated this approach. Several of these Africans followed the religion of Islam (Ali & Chickrie, 2011). However, the British colony possessed greater influence on the nation's socio-cultural landscape than the Dutch, which resulted in a number of Africans converting from Islam to Christianity (Chickrie, 2007; Ali & Chickrie, 2013).

Ali & Chickrie (2013) narrate:

> "Over time, the slaves were literally stripped of all semblances of their native life, their respective languages, traditions, and religious observances of the land of their birth. Thus, by the time slavery was abolished in 1834, there was very little presence of Islamic practices left among the Africans" (para. 5).

However, in 1832, Islam reappeared in Guyana with the arrival of the East Indians, who came from India to work on the sugarcane plantations as indentured laborers (Hollett, 1999; Chickrie, 2007). It is recorded that 85% of the immigrants were Hindus, while 15% were Muslims (Guyana Chronicle, 2014). Although the fundamentals of Islamic practices remained with them, the majority abandoned the Urdu language and Indian culture. The British established English as the official language of Guyana, while a Western lifestyle was integrated into the cultural identity of the younger generations of the immigrant population (Chickrie, 2010).

Subsequently, Muslim missionaries from the Indian subcontinent, followed by those from Middle Eastern countries, visited Guyana, bringing with them Islamic literature, which assisted in the promotion of Islam. Additionally, Guyanese Muslims traveled abroad to acquire a deeper understanding of their religion. Upon their return, they educate and convey the teachings of Islam to others (Chickrie, 1999).

Currently, Muslims in Guyana are permitted to practice the tenets of Islam freely. They are not prevented from disseminating information about this faith. For these reasons, Islam continues to attract Guyanese of diverse ethnicities. Dr. Ahmad (n.d.) records that in 2009, he attended a da'wah outreach program in Guyana for six days, and to his astonishment, more than 500 non-Muslims reverted to Islam.

This research, grounded in historical context, plays a pivotal role in understanding the minds of reverts and establishing the struggles they face in embracing Islam. Al-Attas (2014) illustrates that humanity consists of physical and spiritual components. Thus, this investigation examines and analyzes the external and psychological obstacles Guyanese experienced following their return to Islam. Thereafter, this study aims to provide recommendations to alleviate these challenges.

1.2 The Significance of the Study

Despite the extensive literature on individuals returning to Islam, there exists a deficiency of intellectual perception regarding the long-term adjustment and coping mechanisms reverts experience in shaping their journey in Islam. As such, there remains a paucity of material about reversion to Islam in the Caribbean, as well as South and Latin America. Hence, the issues they encountered in adopting Islam as their new faith are rarely documented in scholarly literature.

Guyanese returning to Islam inspires this research, as it seeks to fill the academic and practical gap in comprehending the challenges experienced by people from multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies throughout their transition to Islam. Previous research has highlighted the internal and external difficulties reverts experience in other regions. Thus, this research examines the personal, psychological, social, and religious obstacles that hinder a smooth transition for Guyanese individuals reverting to Islam. Highlighting these problems emphasizes the need to provide adequate support and guidance for new reverts, as appropriate assistance facilitates the adaptation and integration of Islam and its teachings into their lives. Furthermore, comprehending matters that attract individuals to Islam and the obstacles they encounter after embracing it enhances the development of appropriate da'wah strategies. These strategies ensure that outreach programs and activities are planned with compassion and relevance in addressing the needs of potential and new reverts.

Another aspect of this study aims to develop proactive techniques to facilitate a comfortable integration of reverts into Muslim communities. Inclusive Muslim societies may be established by analyzing the various types and degrees of obstacles reverts encounter and formulating methods to avoid and alleviate these issues. Thus, promoting a comfortable social inclusion into Muslim communities allows reverts to acclimate to their new identity without much difficulty. Moreover, raising awareness within the society assists traditional Muslims in understanding the situation from the reverts' perspective and encourages them to be more tolerant and supportive towards reverts' circumstances.

Similarly, this study seeks to provide relevant and empirical insights for Muslim organizations and local masjids in Guyana, offering substantial assistance and support systems for reverts' integration, such as structured educational programs and social gatherings. Additionally, this research aims to contribute to the academic field of religious studies in Guyana and the Caribbean region.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Reverting to Islam is recognized as a phenomenon that continues to accelerate globally. The increase of Muslim reverts brings to the attention issues they encounter daily, such as identity reconstruction, familial acceptance, social integration, and the challenges of navigating cultural and religious expectations in both Muslim and non-Muslim communities. These perplexities may generate psychological stress, isolation, and strained relationships (Knott, 2017; Duderija & Rane, 2019; Alcones, 2023).

Correspondingly, Guyanese reverting to Islam exhibit no distinction in this regard from global trends. Understanding the obstacles encountered by new reverts and the manner in which the surrounding society addresses these issues raises paramount importance for investigation. Moreover, the limited academic materials on the challenges Guyanese reverts experience in their ethnically diverse environments warrant in-depth exploration. Several reverts in Guyana may face alienation from family, friends, and the society at large. They may encounter difficulty integrating into the new faith and the Muslim community. Therefore, it proves vital to raise awareness of the challenges faced and provide solutions that would establish a strong support system for new Muslims.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

1.4.1 The Aim of the Study

This research, 'Challenges Encountered by New Muslim Reverts in Guyana,' was inspired by the lack of participation of new reverts in Islamic study circles and social activities. Their absence sparked interest in investigating the reasons for their disengagement from the

Muslim community and the possible challenges and obstacles they may have encountered. Subsequently, observing Guyana's diverse ethnicities and cultures aroused interest in comprehending each group's experiences of entering Islam, as well as the influence that cultural background possesses on the reversion process and the integration of reverts into Muslim societies.

Hence, this study aims to facilitate and assist new male and female reverts in Guyana with a smooth transition from their previous theological beliefs and practices to monotheistic ideologies and principles that follow Islamic codes of conduct. It hopes to raise awareness among the general public, both Muslims and non-Muslims, about the psychological stress experienced by new Muslims when they encounter isolation from loved ones and discrimination from the community. It aims to highlight the societal and religious struggles of both genders after embracing Islam.

Moreover, this study intends to pinpoint strategies and support systems that may help reverts practice their new faith effectively. It aspires to provide individuals with the essential tools for self-assistance throughout the reversion process. This research seeks to obtain from long-term Muslim reverts in Guyana the coping mechanisms they employed in dealing with issues they had encountered after their reversion to Islam. Establishing strategies based on the observations from experienced individuals to counteract these difficulties would assist new reverts in managing their circumstances and implementing different methods to suit their unique encounters.

Additionally, this study aims to achieve its objectives by investigating and analyzing the various challenges, including personal, psychological, societal, and religious struggles, faced by reverts to Islam in Guyana. It intends to examine the difficulties experienced during the transition from one identity to another while navigating diverse lifestyles. Similarly, this research seeks to explore the impact of these struggles on the well-being of reverts, their sense of belonging, and their perceived status within the Muslim community.

As such, this investigation employs resources from scholarly materials, including literature, journal articles, and websites, to understand the global challenges faced by other reverts. It observes the alternative solutions proposed for addressing these challenges. Furthermore, the information acquired from the inquiry is intended to be recognized as a concern that affects not just individuals' lives but society as a whole. The proposed solutions are anticipated to assist new reverts throughout Guyana upon implementation by Muslim members and authorities within the various masjids and organizations.

1.4.2 Objectives

The research intends to obtain the following objectives:

1. Obtain relevant information to fill the gap of scholarly research, which highlights problems new reverts face in Guyana.
2. Determine challenges faced by new reverts to Islam in Guyana.
3. Acquire solutions for these issues.
4. Suggest pertinent standards and authorities that may assist in alleviating such challenges.
5. Identify specific areas that contribute to a smoother integration process for individuals who have recently reverted to Islam.
6. Create an environment for an inclusive Muslim community in Guyana.

1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions are initiated to direct the inquiry of this study:

1. What challenges do new Muslims encounter when reverting to Islam in Guyana?
2. What factors contribute to the challenges experienced by these reverts?
3. How do these challenges affect their new personal religious identity and their integration into the Muslim community?
4. What benefits may be derived from highlighting new Muslim challenges in Guyana?

1.6 Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study:

1. Individuals reverting to Islam in Guyana face personal, societal, religious, and psychological challenges during the transition phases into their new faith.
2. Reverts endure feelings of isolation, identity misinterpretation, and emotional distress resulting from inadequate familial and communal support as well as inadequate educational resources.
3. The extent of social and familial opposition influences the well-being and religious commitment of reverts in Guyana.
4. Support systems from the local Muslim community and organizations would reduce the challenges faced by new reverts and enhance their integration into their newfound faith.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into six chapters, each addressing different aspects of the research and designed to investigate and analyze the challenges encountered by Guyanese reverts to Islam. The arrangement of the chapters presents a logical flow for readers.

Chapter One, Introduction, presents background information on the research topic. It outlines the process of reverting to Islam, then provides a brief overview of Guyana, its people, and their cultural and religious composition. In addition, this chapter mentions a concise evolution of Islam in Guyana, establishing the foundation of Muslims in this region of the world. Thereafter, the relevance of the investigation is introduced by stating the significance of the study, the problems faced, and the aims and objectives of the research. At the end of this chapter, the main research questions are formulated, followed by the hypotheses to guide the process.

Chapter Two, Review of the Literature, explores the current literature on the challenges individuals encountered in their journey to Islam as new Muslims. It commences by observing the historical struggles faced by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)

and his companions. It then highlights the difficulties faced by reverts in the medieval era. This chapter further elaborates on the contemporary issues affecting reverts in modern society. It focuses on the reverts' personal, psychological, social, and religious obstacles. This literature review assisted in shaping the theoretical framework that supports the present study in the context of Guyanese reverts' experiences.

Chapter Three, Research Methodology, outlines the research methodology employed for conducting this study. It provides an overview of the participants involved in this investigation, followed by a description of the instruments utilized in gathering the information to be examined. The following section explains the procedures taken to ensure the practical application of the employed instruments. Finally, this chapter describes the methodology used for accumulating, tallying, and analyzing the data.

Chapter Four, Results and Analysis, presents the findings of the study and provides a brief analysis and interpretation of the data collected from informants. The results are organized through thematic coding and comparative methods to enhance the tabulation process. Diagrams and tables are included to visually illustrate the outcome of the gathered information and highlight key patterns.

Chapter Five, Discussion, synthesizes the key findings in relation to the research questions with the study's objectives and pertinent literature. It provides an analysis and interpretation of the results by comparing and contrasting the accumulated data with existing theories and empirical studies. This chapter explains the originality of the investigation and the significance of its contributions to the field.

Chapter Six, Conclusion and Recommendations, restates the purpose of the research and summarizes the main findings by presenting an overall conclusion derived from the study. It then connects these conclusions to the research questions and objectives. The chapter proceeds to offer practical solutions for reverts, Muslim communities, and policymakers to implement. Thereafter, the study outlines its limitations and provides

recommendations for future research. Finally, the chapter closes with concluding remarks that encapsulate the essence of this chapter and the thesis as a whole.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

2.1 Introduction

The reversion of individuals to Islam is recognized as a global phenomenon, as Islam is recorded as the world's fastest-growing religion (Duderija & Rane, 2019; Chan & Dorairajoo, 2020). Nonetheless, each person's reversion may encompass distinct experiences characterized by personal struggles, cultural influences, and societal pressures. Reverts encounter unique challenges that require them to navigate their journey and discover solutions that work for them. As Lahmar aptly states, "Converts are acting as thinkers, interpreters, and inquirers in their own right." (2018, p. 18).

Reverting to Islam signifies an intricate occurrence that progresses gradually over time (Hurvitz et al., 2020; Mohd Dali et al., 2016). Individuals move from initial curiosity and excitement to a state of fulfilling commitments and obligations, subsequently facing and addressing the challenges that arise along the way (Lang, 1995).

People revert to Islam for relational and rational reasons, or a combination of circumstances (Alcones, 2023). Adopting Islam may arise from an eagerness to address a spiritual deficiency or for social convenience and stability (Kose, 1994). For instance, Knutson and Ellis (2021) explain that the pursuit of economic benefits serves as an incentive for individuals to embrace Islam, while Haddad et al. (2006) and Mansuri (2018) suggest that others were attracted to Islam due to its capacity to fulfill intellectual inquiries inadequately addressed by Christianity.

Despite the reason for reversion, the journey of a new Muslim to Islam signifies a profound metamorphosis across various dimensions of existence, including social, cultural, spiritual, and economic realms (Kassim et al., 2013; Marodos & Malayang, 2023; Bowen, 2009). Furthermore, the reconstruction process transpires at individual and communal levels, where new reverts navigate a spectrum of emotions during the transition period (van

Nieuwkerk, 2006). Several reverts share successful narratives, while others delineate the hurdles they encountered during their integration into the new faith.

This literature review utilizes historical and contemporary insights from global and regional studies to explore the multifaceted nature of these challenges, illuminating the sociocultural, psychological, and theological obstacles faced by reverts. Research into this subject uncovers a wide array of challenges, encompassing social stigma, familial estrangement, identity dilemmas, and insufficient support structures within Muslim communities.

2.2 Challenges of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his Companions

The Holy Prophets and Messengers tasked with delivering the message of the Almighty encountered significant hurdles in their efforts to redirect people towards worshipping a singular Supreme Being. The final messenger, Muhammad (صلى الله عليه و سلم - peace be upon him), was not dissimilar in this effort.

His mission to spread Islam among his people presented him with personal, social, psychological, economic, and theological challenges. He (صلى الله عليه و سلم - peace be upon him) faced discrimination from family and tribe members as he endured psychological and physical persecution. He and his supporters experienced boycotts, exclusion, and insults. He was even targeted for assassination by his tribesmen, the Quraish. Moreover, he was devastated by the torture and murder of his followers, which he was powerless to avert (Al-Mubarakpuri, 2002).

The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked:

"Which of the people are most severely tested?" He said: "The Prophets, then those nearest to them, then those nearest to them. A man is tried according to his religion; if he is firm in his religion, then his trials are more severe, and if he is frail in his religion, then he is tried according to the strength of his religion. The servant shall continue to be tried until he is left walking upon the earth without any sins." (Sunan al-Tirmidhī 2398)

A number of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) endured physical brutality, emotional maltreatment, and isolation from family members and associates for embracing Islam, primarily those companions from marginalized socioeconomic strata. For instance, Bilal ibn Rabah (may Allāh be pleased with him), then an enslaved person, was tortured by his master, who placed heavy rocks on his chest under the scorching sun, trying to force him to renounce Islam. Similarly, Ammar ibn Yasir and his family (may Allāh be pleased with them) were tortured severely. Sumayyah, the mother of Ammar (may Allāh be pleased with her), became the first martyr in Islam when Abu Jahl brutally killed her. Abu Jandal and Musab Ibn Umayr were companions who faced persecution from their parents. Likewise, Khabbab ibn al-Aratt, Zunairah, and others encountered significant victimization (Kandhelwi, 2019).

Despite the severity of persecution and discrimination, those who accepted Islam during its formative era demonstrated remarkable steadfastness. Even in the face of torture, exile, and martyrdom, they remained resolute in their faith, upholding and disseminating the message of Islam with unwavering conviction. Their resilience and sacrifices fortified their spiritual commitment and inspired others to follow their path. This unshakable devotion played a pivotal role in expanding Islam across the Arabian Peninsula and laid the groundwork for a global faith that continues to thrive and guide millions worldwide presently (Al-Mubarakpuri, 2002).

2.3 Challenges Reverts Encountered in Medieval Times

As Islam extended to Europe and other continents in the Middle Ages, individuals consistently adopted it as their new faith (Salako & Abiodun, 2019; Simonsohn, 2017; Knutson & Ellis, 2021; Berger, 2014). Hermansen (2014) contends that early reversion to Islam proliferated through violence and force. However, Berger posits otherwise. He affirms that "the most striking feature of Muslim conquest was that the conquering Muslim armies as a general rule did not impose on their non-Muslim subjects a compulsory conversion to Islam" (2014, p. 45). Historians have determined that the motive for accepting Islam in this era represents a phenomenon that transcends a particular viewpoint. For example, Simonsohn

(2017) illustrates that people embraced Islam for spiritual enlightenment, economic benefits, and social advantages.

Despite the justification for reverting to Islam, reverts in both the early and late medieval periods encountered distinct experiences after their reversion. The term ‘Muslims’ was unprecedented in Europe during this era. Muslims were referred to as 'Saracens' and 'Moors.' The references 'Hagarenes' and 'Ishmaelites' were employed explicitly for the Arab Muslims. However, during the ascendance of the Ottoman Empire, the expression 'turning Turks' was utilized for those who reverted to Islam. Nonetheless, religious transformation carried significant political and societal consequences, particularly in regions dominated by Christianity (Berger, 2014).

Coope (1993) highlights the resurgence of cultural and religious commitment to Islam in ninth-century Cordoba, Spain. She notes that numerous individuals publicly embraced Islam to assimilate into the ruling Muslim society and obtain pecuniary and legal advantages afforded to Muslims. However, determining their sincerity was tested by the authorities. For instance, the government mandated males to undergo circumcision as a means of demonstrating their commitment to Islam. Consequently, to evade accusations of apostasy, they outwardly conformed to Islamic practices, while their internal convictions remained anchored in Christianity, practicing it covertly within their residences. However, in the Christian-dominated areas, reverts were shunned by their families and communities. Embracing Islam was viewed as a betrayal of both religious and national identities.

Subsequently, with the fall of Granada in the 15th century, the Muslim dominion underwent a significant shift in power dynamics. The event, known as the Reconquista, resulted in a notable reversal of religious and social structures. Muslims, including reverts to Islam, encountered severe repercussions as they confronted confiscation of property, persecution, and even execution. They were coerced into adopting Christianity or faced expulsion. Moreover, despite their acceptance of Christianity, they were viewed with skepticism as 'crypto-Muslims.' They faced persecution by the Spanish Inquisition, were charged with clandestinely practicing Islam, and were eventually exiled (Berger, 2014).

However, in Egypt, Semeonis (1960, as cited in Forey, 2013) records that in the early 14th century, although Egyptians "had adopted the Islamic religion, at heart they still embraced the Christian faith" (p. 154). Despite several Egyptians publicly accepting Islam, there exist those who reverted sincerely and enjoyed the privileges afforded to Muslims. However, they encountered significant challenges. For example, they experienced familial obstacles in their children's upbringing, as Christian values influenced them due to their close attachment to Christian family members. They endured ridicule from their Christian relatives, friends, and society for abandoning their former faith. Moreover, reverts seeking positions in the Muslim courts faced the formidable task of mastering the Arabic language and were criticized for inaccuracies in its application. Despite their status in the court, they were perceived as subordinate to their Arab counterparts (Coope, 1993; Forey, 2013).

Furthermore, acquiring Islamic knowledge in earlier eras posed considerable challenges for reverts and those born into the faith, due to the difficulty in accessing information. In the modern age, information becomes readily available through digital platforms, translated texts, and widespread access to online resources (Lahmar, 2018). By contrast, in the past, pursuing Islamic knowledge demanded considerable dedication. Individuals were required to pursue direct interaction with scholars, often embarking on lengthy and arduous journeys to study under reputable teachers and institutions. Learning was primarily conducted through oral transmission and intensive study circles, where students memorized religious texts and received guidance through rigorous scholarly discourse (Makdisi, 1981).

In addition, written materials were limited since manuscripts required meticulous hand-copying, making them expensive and challenging to acquire. This limitation meant that only those with the financial means and time to dedicate themselves fully to religious study could access comprehensive Islamic teachings. Thus, acquiring and mastering Islamic knowledge demanded considerable time investment, steadfast devotion, and endurance (Makdisi, 1981; Keles, 2021).

2.4 Challenges Reverts Encountered in Contemporary Times

Reverts in this era face challenges akin to those encountered by previous generations. Nonetheless, in spite of the parallels, including family rejections and difficulty adopting Islamic practices, the nature of the struggles has transformed in this digital age due to societal shifts, globalization, and technological progression. As such, reverts to Islam in this modern era encounter various challenges, categorized as psychological, social, and religious struggles.

2.4.1 Personal and Psychological Struggles

The psychological adjustment after reversion may be difficult for new reverts as they navigate feelings of uncertainty and confusion. Studies underscore the challenges reverts encounter in the initial phase of their journey in Islam. It is noted that identity conflict, feelings of loneliness, and stress from societal antagonism constitute challenges new reverts find difficult to manage (Lahmar, 2018; Haddad et al., 2006).

2.4.1.1 Identity Challenges. New Muslims undergo a process of identity reconstruction on both personal and communal levels, as reshaping one's religious beliefs may result in internal and external conflicts (Kose, 1994; Bartoszewicz, 2013; Weichselbaumer, 2020). This reorientation occurs when attempting to balance Islamic principles and pre-existing cultural norms or eradicate non-Islamic habits.

Numerous reverts acknowledge that adopting an Islamic lifestyle constitutes a personal struggle that alters daily norms (Galonnier, 2021). The commitment to a new beginning brought restrictions that necessitated a shift in attire, dietary habits, gender segregation, economic funding, and social engagements, aligning with the new religious tenets. For example, reverts adopt modest garments, with women opting for the hijab or abaya and males conforming to clothing regulations that ensure the appropriate covering of the body. Dietary modifications necessitate the exclusion of pork, alcohol, and any food or product that is forbidden to consume.

These changes lead to challenges in daily interactions and social gatherings, particularly with non-Muslim relatives and acquaintances. For instance, Morados and Malayand (2023) point out that several reverts in the Philippines expressed emotions of fear and anxiety regarding wearing the hijab (Muslim women's clothing) in public. Others highlighted the difficulties of accessing halal food (permissible to consume according to Islamic law) and related items in a predominantly non-Muslim environment. Similarly, Weichselbaumer (2020) illustrates the distress Muslim women in Germany experience when wearing the hijab, highlighting the inequality they encounter. This degree of intolerance contributes to feelings of isolation, anxiety, and emotional distress as Muslim women are caught between their religious convictions and societal pressures (Ussif et al., 2020).

Correspondingly, Kose (1994) opines that individuals may adopt a Muslim name as an aspect of embracing Islam, symbolizing their newfound faith and identity. This change reflects their commitment to Islamic principles and desire to distance themselves from past beliefs or cultural associations. However, this transitional step incurs challenges, as family, friends, and colleagues may hesitate in accepting or acknowledging the newly adopted name, resulting in feelings of alienation, frustration, and emotional disconnection for reverts. Despite these difficulties, adopting an Islamic name serves as a powerful affirmation of reverts' beliefs and a progression towards deeper integration within the Muslim community.

Furthermore, Kose (1994) posits that the emergence of a new Islamic identity forces British individuals to adopt dual identities—Muslim and British—based on their social circumstances. The dichotomy emerges as they strive to reconcile their religion with British cultural expectations and customs. Hence, Hewitt (1990, as cited in Kose, 1994) refers to this complex negotiation of identities as the "two-headed syndrome," highlighting the psychological and social tension that reverts experience as they shift between these two worlds.

Conversely, several reverts reject the notion of navigating multiple identities; instead, they emphasize the universal nature of Islam. They assert that Islam transcends national, ethnic, and cultural boundaries, offering a global identity rooted in faith rather than

geography or heritage (Lahmar, 2018). For these individuals, religious affiliation takes precedence over racial or national ties, allowing them to fully immerse themselves in their new faith without the internal conflict of divided cultural loyalties. By prioritizing religious brotherhood and shared Islamic values, they achieve a sense of belonging that surpasses the limitations of cultural or ethnic identification.

Kassim et al. (2013) contend that reverts in Malaysia experience analogous challenges of defining their new identity while residing within the current community:

> The transition period experienced by the converts attests [to] their inner conflicts adapting to their new surroundings. Their parental faith may no longer be relevant, but adopting a new religion and living in the present society with different traditions of the old religious faith could lead to traumatic inner conflicts which are invisible (p. 85).

Uchendu (2010) illustrates that this identity crisis leads Igbo new Muslims into internal conflict as they redefine their sense of 'self.' The transition from their former religious identity to a new Islamic identity is not merely spiritual but profoundly social and cultural. She notes that "Igbo converts to Islam find themselves in the center of the pull between their new religious family and their discarded religious family" (p. 85). This tension manifests as a continuous negotiation of belonging, where the psychological and emotional toll result in a sense of isolation, confusion, and a persistent search for acceptance in both communities.

Roald (2006) further delineates the perplexed sentiments of Scandinavian reverts as they attempt to integrate into the established Muslim society. These individuals juxtapose their 'outer' social identity with their 'inner' sense of self, resulting in a state of identity dissonance. Roald demonstrates that reverts "choose either to remain within the Muslim cultural paradigm (being cultural converts) or, like second-generation Muslim children, develop 'integrated plural identities…" (2006, p. 50). However, the interconnectedness of Islamic practices and traditional Muslim culture presents a significant challenge for reverts seeking to assimilate and cultivate a distinct Islamic identity.

This complexity emerges as born Muslims (like Arabs, Pakistanis, and others) project their cultural identity onto reverts, complicating their efforts to establish a distinct sense of

self within the broader religious framework. Reverts strive to navigate their spiritual transformation while preserving aspects of their original culture, which, although aligned with Islamic principles, may differ from the cultural norms of born Muslims (Lahmar, 2018). Anthony, a British convert interviewed by Kose, stated that "many born Muslims will have particular ideas of Islam which perhaps reflect cultural traditions or conservatism or things rather than Islam itself" (1994, p. 142). His statement underscores the tension that reverts face when trying to distinguish between authentic Islamic teachings and culturally influenced interpretations practiced by born Muslims.

2.4.1.2 Isolation. During the initial stage of the reversion process, reverts often experience a sense of excitement and feel warmly embraced by the Muslim community. However, as time passes, individuals may detect themselves navigating their journey alone, with limited support from family, friends, and the Muslim and non-Muslim communities. This gradual isolation stems from several factors.

One of the most notable challenges arises from the estrangement and rejection from family and friends. They perceive the acceptance of Islam by their loved ones as an act of disloyalty to the revert's previous religion and cultural heritage (Alyedreessy, 2016). This perception may engender disappointment, resentment, and hostility among relatives and close associates who struggle to comprehend the motivations behind the transformation. Lahmar contends that the inability of family and friends to comprehend the revert's new practices and behavioral changes may result in strained familial relationships and the deterioration of long-standing friendships, particularly "when the new faith becomes visible in public spaces" (2018, p. 9). Galonnier (2021) argues that isolation from family and friends remains an issue for reverts, due to their loved ones' incomprehension of Islam and its teachings.

In other cases, reversion to Islam is misinterpreted as alignment with radical ideologies, particularly in societies where Islam is associated with extremism attributable to media portrayals and political narratives. Families and friends are concerned that their loved ones' reversion signifies an endorsement of terrorism. Such fallacies may produce distrust, alienation, and disownment (Haddad, 2006; Uchendu, 2010; Alyedreessy, 2016). Kose

(1994) posits that the social perception of reverts has transitioned from acceptance to marginalization. Consequently, reverts endure considerable tension and discomfort, particularly when confronted with formidable resistance from their families. This challenge intensifies when parents, deeply entrenched in their religious convictions, find it difficult to accept their child's choice to embrace Islam. This familial disapproval is compounded by concerns about social reputation, as relatives may fear judgment or ostracization from their wider community. This strain may leave reverts feeling isolated, as they are torn between their dedication to their religion and their desire to preserve familial cohesion.

Additionally, the interaction between new reverts and the Muslim community plays a vital role in influencing reverts' experiences after embracing Islam. Although several reverts receive substantial support from the Muslim community, others experience a sense of loneliness and alienation from their new religious environment. This estranged circumstance, which arises from cultural disparities, insufficient guidelines, or unfulfilled social expectations, may exacerbate the feeling of isolation and create a barrier in the process of integration between new Muslims and those born into the faith (Kassim et al., 2013; Sahad et al., 2013; Abdullah et al., 2022; Alyedreessy, 2016).

2.4.1.3 Integration. Integrating into the Muslim community is registered as a vital and arduous facet of a revert's journey into Islam. Roald (2012) emphasizes the various phases of the revert’s experience, accentuating that they are preoccupied with their new religion and dedicate a significant portion of their time to studying it during the initial phase. Subsequently, acknowledging the gravity of Islamic laws and regulations leads to adverse effects for new reverts. After that, they confront the challenge of gaining acceptance within the born Muslim community, as the community's unfavorable disposition leads to considerable disappointment for reverts. The dichotomy of "us" and "them" utilized by born Muslims exacerbates the tension between these two groups, which may result in reverts departing from Islam (Roald, 2012). Shahid (2013) explains several reasons for reverts' abandonment of Islam. He states that isolation and a lack of acceptability within the Muslim community are cited as everyday issues. Kassim et al. (2013) assert that these obstacles may

result in apostasy, despite the relatively low statistical rate in Malaysia. Morgan and Sulong (2020) affirm the existence of apostates in Malaysia. Nonetheless, they indicate that an inconsequential quantity was documented throughout their investigation.

According to Lahmar (2018), reverts experience ostracism and judgment from Muslim communities. They face skepticism regarding their sincerity and depth of commitment as born Muslims impose cultural expectations on reverts, which they struggle to meet. This lack of trust leaves reverts feeling excluded from the Muslim society. Furthermore, reverts from diverse ethnic backgrounds encounter additional obstacles due to the implicit acknowledgement of racial sentiments. For instance, Haddad reveals the narratives of American reverts within the community of immigrant Muslims. She records that one revert shared her perspective of the Muslim community she resided in, stating, "I have come to realize there is an inherent hatred among Muslims for Americans, and especially for single, white, female Americans." In addition, Haddad notes that several white American women indicated that "it is hard to stay in the community if a family does not adopt you or you get married to a Muslim" (2006, p. 40). Similarly, Razick et al. (2020) illustrate the stigmatization of reverts within the traditional Muslim society in Sri Lanka. He states that born Muslims refer to reverts as 'Moula-Islam,' a pejorative word akin to 'Balik-Islam' used in the Philippines (Alcones, 2023).

Correspondingly, Galonnier (2021) acknowledges that due to reverts' timidity or inadequate understanding of Islam's etiquette, new Muslims in France and America find it awkward to integrate into the Muslim community. Likewise, Manduri relates that Latino female reverts who reside in America experience exclusion from communal activities within immigrant Muslim communities. They encounter a "double-edged marginality," facing challenges as women of color and as outsiders within predominantly Arab and South Asian Muslim circles (2018, p. 29).

Conversely, Kose (1994) draws a different conclusion. He proposes that reverts who reside in predominantly Muslim regions may experience less tension than those who reside in regions with a low Muslim population. However, he further clarifies that the experiences of

British reverts varied throughout various communities. For instance, in several cases, the British reverts discovered strategies to build a connection between new Muslims and the traditional Muslim community. One such technique involved active participation in Islamic organizations, where individuals undertook duties in community outreach, education, and social welfare through paid or voluntary endeavors. In addition, Kose (1994) states that reverts' unique perspectives as former non-Muslims allow them to effectively communicate Islamic teachings to others who may be curious about the faith. As a consequence, reverts play a pivotal role in assisting the reversion of others by providing guidance and mentorship that resonates with those exploring Islam. These initiatives foster an inclusive and supportive Muslim community, reaffirming reverts' convictions.

Thus, Meadow and Kahoe (1984, as cited in Kose, 1994) illustrate the efficacy of a constructive and fulfilling reversion to Islam rather than a discouraging and regressive experience. These authors postulate that the nature and quality of interactions with members of the Muslim community impact reverts' sustained state of reversion. The socialization process plays an important role in the quality of reverts' effective assimilation into the Muslim population while influencing the development of their new religious identity. Furthermore, Lahmar (2018) purports that the increasing number of reverts enables the socialization and assimilation process of new Muslims into a society of reverts. Similarly, Kose (1994) points out the role of social cohesion in sustaining religious reversion. He states that the validation and recognition from other members of the society play a crucial role in reinforcing a revert's new identity.

However, Haddad (2006) elucidates that although younger American reverts integrate into the immigrant Muslim community with relative ease, older reverts express a contrasting experience, which indicates that the community may lack the hospitality expected. Certain reverts express the perception of being scrutinized for even the slightest deviation from immigrants' cultural or ritual norms. In addition, reverts' inability to articulate or comprehend the Arabic or Urdu language was cited as a barrier that prevented them from being fully integrated into these Muslim communities.

2.4.2 Social Struggles

New Muslims' reversion to Islam accompanies social struggles, such as rejection, misunderstanding, and hostility from their families, friends, and the broader society. Several reverts are pressured to abandon their new faith to conform to societal expectations, while others struggle to gain acceptance within Muslim communities due to cultural differences.

2.4.2.1 Islamophobia and Discrimination. Individuals who revert to Islam encounter distinct obstacles associated with Islamophobia and discrimination. Negative media portrayals of Islam among non-Muslims in Western societies lead to these phenomena (Brice, 2010). In addition, there exist circumstances where reverts encounter prejudice from within the Muslim community. These social injustices may manifest from subtle social exclusion to overt antagonism (Haddad, 2006). For example, Alyedreessy (2016) highlights the discrimination that the reverts in her study experienced from the Muslim community. She records that "African and Caribbean converts complained about negative attitudes from heritage Muslims towards them and about White converts being treated as valuable social trophies in Muslim communities when they embraced Islam" (2016, p. 173).

Moreover, the non-Muslim community's negative biases and prejudices towards a revert's religious expression may produce far-reaching consequences, impacting their emotional well-being, social relationships, and overall sense of belonging. Van Nieuwkerk highlights the societal indifference white female reverts encounter in Western society, emphasizing the unique challenges they face in their transition to Islam. She remarks that females entering Islam "may raise even stronger reactions because traditions have often constructed women as symbols of ethnic and religious boundaries." For example, one female participant she interviewed conveyed that, as white reverts, they are perceived by others as disloyal to their ethnic identity (2006, p. 1). Furthermore, Weichselbaumer (2020) observes that the prejudice faced by Muslim women is recognized as more significant than that experienced by Muslim men. This discrimination arises from the prominent symbols of their faith, such as wearing the hijab and long attire. These indicators make them identifiable and susceptible to bias and prejudice.

2.4.2.2 Islamic Practices in Public Spaces. Observing the Islamic dress code (hijab) is recorded as a phenomenon that affects female reverts as well as females born into Islam (Ussif et al., 2020; Marodos & Malayang, 2023). However, the discrimination experienced by each group varies based on specific individual circumstances. Reverts to Islam encounter more challenges than those born into the faith, as their detractors include family, friends, and members of a non-Muslim community. Conversely, females born and raised within a Muslim family encounter less scrutiny than reverts, as the Islamic traditions are deeply embedded in their ancestral lineage (Lahmar, 2018). Nonetheless, this evident expression of reverts accepting Islam is perceived by opponents as a radical action and a potential threat that jeopardizes close relationships.

Family members and colleagues expressed their concerns about societal perceptions of reverts' physical appearance in public. For example, individuals who accepted Islam in the Philippines recounted the discrimination they experienced upon choosing to wear the hijab. Reports indicated that females have been compelled to remove the hijab in workplaces and educational institutions. One revert encountered employment loss due to her insistence on wearing the hijab, while others highlighted their exclusion from previously attended social occasions. Similarly, other female reverts reported challenges in obtaining private or public transportation, noting that drivers tended to prioritize passengers not wearing hijabs over those wearing them (Marodos & Malayang, 2023).

As a result, reverts are excluded from social gatherings and may even face persecution for their adherence to Islamic practices (Haddad, 2006; Uchendu, 2010). One informant reflected on the societal prejudice he endured:

> Each time I thought about how people treated me in this community, I felt like going back to the church. And each time I remembered my previous life of affluence, the friends I lost by becoming a Muslim, and many other things, I felt like renouncing my faith. The worst challenge was from my family. (Uchendu, 2010, p. 86-87)

Similarly, Khadija, a participant in Alyedreessy's research, commented on the hostility she encountered from her white Christian community after she accepted Islam. She

recollected the verbal abuse she received, which engendered fear in her to the extent that she felt uneasy traversing the streets alone (Alyedreessy, 2016). The differences in cultural upbringing and ethical values compared to Islamic standards create substantial barriers between the two cultures (Haddad, 2006; Lahmar, 2018). Likewise, Uchendu (2010) asserts that traditional Muslims and Nigerians who reverted to Islam face marginalization and are treated as outcasts. The Igbo people in Nigeria possess a strong cultural and political identity affiliated with Christianity. Thus, Christians view individuals who revert to Islam with skepticism and animosity, perceiving such reversion as a repudiation of one's "Igbo identity" or as an act of alienating their "Igbo-ness." This stereotypical conduct impedes the ability of new Muslims to participate in conventional leadership paradigms or to be included in discussions of Igbo heritage and advancement.

2.4.2.3 Terrorists. Muslims living in Western nations face sociocultural challenges resulting from the preconceptions that define them as possible terrorists and jihadists. Unfortunately, individuals who embrace Islam often experience similar perceptions, primarily when their outward appearance conforms to Islamic practices. However, reverts' limited understanding of Islamic beliefs and teachings, as well as their affiliation with misguided factions, has been identified as a factor contributing to the perception that they pose a more significant security concern than traditional Muslims (Bartoszewicz, 2013; Brice, 2010; Duderija & Rane, 2019; Lamar, 2018). Correspondingly, Friedman (2005) reports in the New York Times that in Western society, every Muslim carries the stigma of being a suspect of a terrorist collusion.

Parallel to this, Igbo Nigerian reverts experience the same conventional stigma as traditional Muslims. They are categorized as usurpers of land and considered agents that alter the Igbo culture and ethnic identity. The Igbo Nigerians fear that with an increase in Igbo people reverting to Islam, their communities could be lost to Muslims, whom they see as destructive individuals. One Igbo man states, "Muslims preach peace and propagate war, terrorism, destruction, confusion, and riot" (Uchendu, 2010, p. 83).

On the contrary, Mark, a new revert in Britain, recounts the interrogation he encountered from fellow Muslims as they suspected him of being a government spy. Such suspicion engendered mistrust among Muslims and weakened the foundation of brotherhood. Additionally, new Muslims were frequently met with condescension and excluded from delivering lectures at their local mosques, as they were presumed to lack sufficient knowledge of Islamic principles (Alyedreessy, 2016).

2.4.3 Religious Struggles

Islamic jurisprudence represents a comprehensive framework that governs all aspects of a Muslim's life, including forms of worship, social conduct, and financial transactions. Understanding and complying with religious mandates may be daunting for new reverts without sufficient elucidation and direction.

2.4.3.1 Insufficient Islamic Knowledge. Numerous individuals who reverted to Islam grapple with comprehending their responsibilities and differentiating between cultural customs and Islamic doctrines. Thus, Husain (1994, as cited in Kassim et al., 2013) reveals that an inadequate understanding of the new faith's beliefs and obligations before reverting to Islam contributes to the difficulties faced by reverts post-reversion. Hence, the absence of guidance and support from learned members of the Muslim society hinders reverts' ability to fully implement their faith with confidence (Brice, 2010).

Likewise, reverts often face considerable challenges accessing structured educational support after reversion. Researchers highlight several barriers, including the inconvenient scheduling of Islamic classes for working individuals, poorly trained instructors, and disorganized curricula that rely on outdated or culturally irrelevant Islamic literature (Mohd Dali et al., 2016; Rasip et al., 2025). This lack of tailored programs and mentorship from Islamic institutions and leaders results in reverts feeling alienated from the Muslim community. Their enthusiasm for obtaining Islamic knowledge renders them susceptible to the complexities of online learning, considering the overwhelming volume of information available. Engaging in online inquiries may expose individuals to incongruous web materials.

Such exposure may adversely affect their spiritual and social development, which may result in them embracing extremism (Lahmar, 2018).

Moreover, new reverts in Britain faced challenges accessing learning institutions and masjids that offered Islamic teachings in English. Several Islamic centers catered to specific ethnic communities, with sermons and classes conducted in languages unfamiliar to new Muslims. As a result, those seeking religious education struggled to locate study circles where they could learn foundational Islamic principles without language barriers. In addition, the difficulties reverts experience in engaging with the Muslim community members impede their ability to develop their understanding of Islamic teachings and values, as well as identify solutions to issues that may affect them as new Muslims (Alyedreessy, 2016).

2.4.3.2 Arabic Language Difficulties. The Arabic language represents an essential component of the religion of Islam. The Muslims' sacred text, the Holy Qurān, was revealed in Arabic, and the language of their last Prophet, Muhammad (peace be upon him), is Arabic. Therefore, learning Arabic for establishing the daily prayers and reciting the Holy Qurān is recognized as a necessary element for everyday worship. Nevertheless, non-Arabic-speaking Muslims, whether born into the religion or who have embraced Islam, struggle to learn and fully engage with the Qurān as well as perform their prayers with confidence due to linguistic barriers (Lahmar, 2018). Lamkahouan (2024) declares:

> Muslims offer their five daily prayers in Arabic, as well as many of the supplications they recite when leaving home, beginning and ending a meal, or before going to sleep. Additionally, all of [the] Islamic knowledge of the Prophet's sunnah and authentic hadiths is in Arabic. Memorizing the Qurān in Arabic, with proper pronunciation, is a goal for scores of Muslims and a source of blessing in both this life and the hereafter. (Lamkahouan, 2024, para. 2)

Alcones (2023) informs of the challenges new reverts encountered with the Arabic language. He records one informant from his study saying, "I am very poor on reading and reciting verses of the Qurān and reading it because of the pronunciation" (2023, p. 1064). Lamkahouan (2024) further postulates that this difficulty in language adjustment hinders reverts' spiritual connection with their Creator.

2.4.3.3 Adhering to Islamic Principles. Rambo (1993) acknowledges that adhering to the compulsory tenets of Islam requires a sustainable effort for reverts from secular backgrounds. For instance, Kose observes that reverts from Britain "seem to initially practice the ‘don’ts’ rather than ‘do’s’ of Islam" (1994, p. 138). He articulates that refraining from Islamic prohibitions such as consuming pork, drinking alcohol, and engaging in premarital relationships during the initial phase of reversion was less arduous for reverts compared to observing the daily prayer routines or fasting throughout the month of Ramadan. Correspondingly, men who entered Islam reported that undergoing circumcision proved difficult for them.

Likewise, Muslim women register that observing the Islamic dress code poses a greater obstacle for them than for men. Muslim women are required to dress modestly by covering their hair and refraining from revealing their physical beauty, which is regarded as a form of protection for them. Nevertheless, such attire distinguishes Muslim women in society and may attract unfavorable attention. For this reason, Kose (1994) posits that a few British reverts in his research modify their headscarves to align with societal preferences, while others mentioned that they refrain from wearing the hijab in public spaces to avoid unwanted attention.

On the same note, women who revert to Islam encounter difficulties finding appropriate Muslim spouses, particularly in a society where the number of male reverts is limited. This challenge is further compounded when born-Muslim men prefer marrying women from their own ethnic or cultural backgrounds. As such, female reverts from other ethnicities are being excluded from marriages within the traditional Muslim community. As a result, pursuing a suitable companion who could contribute to the establishment of a Muslim family and nurture a faith-oriented household becomes daunting and emotionally taxing (Mansuri, 2018).

2.4.3.4 Cultural Customs versus Islamic Practices. Another challenging aspect of new reverts’ encounters arises from distinguishing cultural customs from religious practices. Reverts convey disappointment upon recognizing that Islamic principles are not always

observed in actual Muslim practices. They noted that cultural habits originating from traditional Muslims are interwoven into Islamic practices and presented to reverts as integral components of Islamic teachings (Alyedreessy, 2016). As a consequence, reverts struggle to differentiate between religious teachings and culturally influenced customs. This blending of culture and religion creates confusion as reverts are pressured into adopting such cultural practices. This position requires reverts to remain continuously reflexive in discerning religious obligations from cultural customs of a Muslim heritage background (Brice, 2010; Gudrun Jensen, 2008; Roald, 2006; Suleiman, 2013, 2016; Lahmar, 2018).

Similarly, Roald adumbrates that new Muslims from Scandinavia registered "their particular understanding of Islam as being different from that of the immigrant [Muslim] community" (2006, p. 53). She indicates that this discrepancy arises when reverts notice a conflict between Islamic teachings and immigrants' cultural behavior. This disparity prompts reverts to adjust the Islamic teachings to suit their lifestyle. One of the participants in Roald's investigation stated, "As the Islamic sources have always been interpreted through cultural filters, we, the Swedish Muslims, might create a Swedish Islam" (2006, p. 53). In addition, Mansuri (2018) elucidates that the Latina reverts in America fostered a "culture of resistance" by establishing an Islamic organization, enabling them to embrace both their Latino and Muslim identities without experiencing marginalization. As a result, several reverts distance themselves from the traditional Muslim community and establish support networks, while others renounce Islam altogether. This repercussion arises from the insufficient knowledge, empathy, and lack of assistance provided by traditional Muslims, who fail to fully grasp the intricate complexities faced by new Muslims in the initial stage of their journey as Muslims (Lahmar, 2018; Brice, 2010).

2.4.3.5 Sects and Schools of Thought. Upon embracing Islam, reverts expect a unified religious experience. However, they are confronted with various interpretations of the Islamic texts, ranging from Sunni and Shia branches to legal schools (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali) and ideological movements. Reverts are overwhelmed by these different sects and schools, as they are unacquainted with the historical and theological differences.

Additionally, these factions confuse new Muslims who struggle to understand which interpretation to follow, especially when receiving conflicting advice from members of the Muslim community. Reverts find themselves pressured to align with a particular sect or school without fully grasping the nuances of Islamic jurisprudence (Salako, 2022; Lahmar, 2018; Alyedreessy, 2016).

On the contrary, Chen and Dorairajoo posit that prior to and during the reversion process, American reverts "did not think of different sects of Islam, since they were mainly convinced by some common theologies in Islam." However, in the post-reversion period, reverts chose "a school of jurisprudence." One informant in this research stated, "When I accepted Islam, I knew there were a few main groups, but I also read the opinion that sects shouldn't exist in Islam. We are all submitting to the same God. I never gave it much thought past that. The mainstream seemed to be Sunni, so I did just go with that" (2020, p. 5).

2.5. Conclusion

The literature review elucidates the various challenges new reverts experienced when they journeyed into Islam. It emphasizes the psychological, social, cultural, and religious issues they face and the obstacles they strive to overcome in establishing and maintaining their new religious identity. The journey to Islam represents a personal transformation and a delicate integration process into the broader Muslim society. Investigations discover the skepticism reverts encounter from non-Muslim families, friends, and traditional Muslim communities while struggling to differentiate between cultural practices and Islamic teachings.

Furthermore, studies indicate that public acceptability greatly impacts the sustainability of an individual's religious reversal. The extent to which reverts feel supported and included by society influences their religious commitment and psychological well-being. While several reverts may seek solace in their new identity, others experience alienation. Despite these challenges, reverts demonstrate steadfastness in upholding their new religious identity and becoming active contributors to the religion of Islam. As a result, navigating these

challenges requires patience, resilience, and a strong support system to maintain the dimensions of one's spiritual and social journey.

The information that was provided by numerous research studies and investigations underscores the importance of acknowledging the challenges in specific contexts and regions. Several issues that affected reverts of the past eras continue to be hindrances in the present, such as familial isolation and social discrimination. Hence, the literature provides insight into the formation and organization of the survey's questions to assess the circumstances of new Muslims in Guyana. Overall, the severity of the situation, as mentioned in books, journals, and web articles, provides awareness that better facilitates the planning and execution of this project. Hence, this study aims to address the scholarly gap in identifying the challenges faced by new reverts to Islam in Guyana and highlight areas that uniquely address their needs.

CHAPTER III

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodologies employed in conducting this study's investigation. It explains the procedures applied in executing the various stages of this project and their relevance to this research. Additionally, this component presents an overview of the respondents who participated in this exploration and delineates the types of instruments used in collecting the data. Thereafter, this section elucidates the procedures implemented to ensure the practical application of the instruments. Finally, it describes the approaches utilized in analyzing the collected data.

To recap, the research questions proposed were as follows:

1. What challenges do new Muslims encounter when reverting to Islam in Guyana?
2. What factors contribute to the challenges experienced by these reverts?
3. How do these challenges affect their new personal religious identity and their integration into the Muslim community?
4. What benefits may be derived from highlighting new Muslim challenges in Guyana?

In addressing the research questions, this study adopted a hybrid technique that combined quantitative and qualitative approaches. Blaxter et al. declare that quantitative data delivers more accurate information, while qualitative data elucidates the subject matter (2006). As such, amalgamating these methodologies resulted in a comprehensive and expansive understanding of the obstacles new Muslims encounter in Guyana. Creswell and Clark relate that a mixed-methodology approach "provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone" (2007, p. 5). Malina et al. (2011) underscore that mixed-methods procedures incorporate both inductive and deductive reasoning, thereby mitigating personal biases that may highly impact the study.

3.2 The Participants

The study's quantitative and qualitative methodologies targeted a larger population than a single method would allow. Cohen et al. (2007) maintain that a significant number of samples employed stands preferable as it enhances the reliability and accuracy of statistical analysis. Consequently, the participants for this inquiry were chosen from the Guyanese Muslim population. New reverts from seven of the ten regions in Guyana participated in the survey. A broader spectrum of the new Muslims in Guyana increased the trustworthiness of the results and facilitated a comparative analysis of the challenges encountered. The respondents were selected based on their reversion to Islam, as they represented the capacity of new Muslims in Guyana. The duration of reversion to Islam ranged from less than one year to 10 years. It was observed that a substantial proportion (n = 61) of participants reverted from Christianity.

Since this study investigated and analyzed the personal, psychological, social, and religious problems new reverts encountered, both genders were surveyed, as males and females faced unique challenges. The participants for the written survey comprised 77 adult Muslims—24 males and 53 females—while 11 informants participated in the one-on-one interview. This investigation limited the survey to adults due to the time constraints allotted for completion of this thesis. Similarly, adults were selected based on their life experiences, allowing them to articulate their challenges in shifting from one lifestyle to another.

The surveyed population consisted of individuals aged eighteen to forty-six and older. The majority (n = 48) originated from the younger demographic, aged 18 to 35. Additionally, the participants represented an array of ethnicities, predominantly Afro-Guyanese (n = 32) and mixed-race (n = 29). They originated from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. A substantial cohort of 43 respondents belonged to the middle economic standing.

The amalgamation of quantitative and qualitative methods in collecting data enabled this study to apply probability and non-probability sampling strategies among new Muslims in Guyana. A combination of two sampling strategies was carried out due to the limited sample

size designated to reflect the broader community of reverts. A stratified random sampling method was selected from the probability sampling strategies. Cohen et al. advance that:

> A stratified random sample is, therefore, a useful blend of randomization and categorization, thereby enabling both a quantitative and qualitative piece of research to be undertaken. A quantitative piece of research will be able to use analytical and inferential statistics, while a qualitative piece of research will be able to target those groups in institutions or clusters of participants who will be able to be approached to participate in the research. (2007, p. 112)

Additionally, a snowball sampling method was utilized as part of the non-probability sampling strategy. This technique facilitated the gathering of data from reverts in remote areas of Guyana via a WhatsApp link created through Google Forms. Pasikowski states that snowball sampling "is appreciated for its flexibility and the ability to gather data from unknown, hidden, hard-to-reach, or socially sensitive populations" (2023, p. 106).

3.3 The Instrument

The selection of the research instrument was influenced by several factors, including the nature of the project, the number of people involved, and the allocated timeframe to execute this study. Henceforth, written questionnaires (Appendix 1) and one-on-one interviews (Appendix 2) were employed to accumulate information on new Muslims' challenges after embracing Islam.

Brown (2001) elucidates that a questionnaire represents any written device designated to provide respondents with a number of queries, which they are required to answer either by writing or choosing a reply from among existing answers. Hence, the written questionnaire was prepared with structured and open-ended questions. Mackey and Gass comment on structured and open-ended questions, which extract parallel information from participants. They express that:

> Structured questions typically involve a greater uniformity of measurement and therefore greater reliability. They also lead to answers that can be easily quantified and analyzed. Open-ended items, on the other hand, allow respondents to express their own thoughts and ideas in their own manner and thus may result in more unexpected and insightful data. (2005, p. 93).

The written questionnaire gathered the respondents' demographic information to contextualize the population and observe similarities and differences. According to Ziegenfuss et al. (2021), demographic data facilitates statistical comparisons, which enhances the ability to identify trends and draw conclusions. Thereafter, the structured inquiries were designed with checkboxes and multiple-choice questions. Additionally, ranking and 5-point Likert scale questions were included. The ranking scale consisted of choices from 'most challenging' to 'least challenging.' The 5-point Likert scale was numbered from 1 to 5, with number one representing 'strongly agree,' while number five symbolized 'strongly disagree.' However, the questionnaire included a few open-ended questions. These open-ended questions collected additional information and elucidated participants' viewpoints in their choice of structured responses.

On the other hand, one-on-one interviews were conducted to gather comprehensive information on participants' experiences with the difficulties they faced after reverting to Islam. Face-to-face conversations yielded additional details that the questionnaires were incapable of acquiring. Cohen et al. opine that unstructured responses allowed respondents to provide answers freely without being limited to selected choices, despite the difficulty in coding and quantifying the collected particulars (2007).

The questionnaire was categorized into seven sections, each containing approximately five questions. The first section sought respondents' demographic characteristics, while the second gathered insights into reverts' initial experiences upon embracing Islam. The third segment focused on new Muslims' personal and religious challenges after entering Islam. The fourth, fifth, and sixth components explored the psychological, social, and cultural hurdles encountered by reverts, respectively. The concluding section captured the participants' general reflections on their journey in Islam.

For the one-on-one interview, several questions were prepared, beginning with a few demographic inquiries. Subsequently, questions were explored on the reverts’ initial journey into Islam. This section was succeeded by obtaining insights from reverts on their

experiences with family, friends, and both Muslim and non-Muslim communities after accepting Islam. Lastly, information was gathered to determine how to improve the situation for new Muslims in Guyana by seeking advice and suggestions from reverts. During the interview, a few questions were omitted depending on the relevance of each respondent's experiences. On the contrary, probing inquiries were incorporated for other individuals, eliciting more profound reflections and obtaining richer insights into the participants' observations.

3.4 The Procedures

As mentioned previously, the study implemented a stratified random sampling procedure and a snowball sampling method for data collection owing to the quantitative and qualitative nature of the research instruments and the limited sample size that represented the broader community. During these procedures, research ethics and confidentiality were strictly observed in order to seek respondents' participation in accumulating their information. Potential respondents were informed that participating in the survey or interview was voluntary, and they were offered the option to decline their involvement partially or entirely, without any consequences. Blaxter affirms that transparency between the researcher and the research subjects about the terms of the contract constitutes an essential aspect of research ethics. Furthermore, he elaborates that "ethical research involves getting the informed consent of those you are going to interview, question, observe, or take materials from" (2001, p. 158).

Prior to distributing the questionnaires and the Google Form survey link via WhatsApp to the masses, a pilot survey was conducted with five individuals who closely resembled the target population. This process checked the practicality of the questionnaire's content for any ambiguities in the wording and structure of the survey. The application of the Google Form survey was examined for easy usage and technical functionality. Thereafter, areas that required adjustment were amended for clarity and comprehensibility.

Furthermore, the implementation of the pilot survey alleviated potential challenges that respondents might have faced if these issues remained unresolved. Romanko and Nakatsugawa (2013) assert that pilot testing allows researchers to improve the feasibility of the questionnaire by identifying issues and obtaining feedback on aspects such as phrasing, question comprehension, instruction clarity, required completion time, and layout.

The questionnaires were distributed on paper and through a Google Form link via the WhatsApp platform. Mackey and Gass observe that questionnaires possess the ability to extract parallel information from respondents and could be distributed in various forms (2005). Consequentially, Google Forms Survey provides a user-friendly online interface for creating and developing web-based questionnaires (Vasantha & Harinarayana, 2016).

However, the one-on-one interviews were conducted privately between each individual and the researcher. Their responses were written down for further analysis. Cohen et al. posit that "interview is a flexible tool for data collection, enabling multi-sensory channels to be used: verbal, non-verbal, spoken, and heard" (2007). The interview was semi-structured. The first section acquired demographic data and a few set responses, while the latter portion allowed the respondents to explain and elaborate on the challenges they experienced. Britten (1999) postulates that a semi-structured, face-to-face interviewing technique facilitates comprehensive responses and enables an exploration of novel concepts.

The Google Form questionnaires via WhatsApp link were forwarded directly to a number of reverts. Additionally, they were disseminated through intermediaries to reach reverts in remote areas utilizing the snowball sampling strategy. Similarly, the paper surveys were distributed in person to several participants. When the questionnaires were administered in the compounds of the masjids or other institutions, permission was sought from the leaders (Imaams) or those in authority. Furthermore, ethical conditions were observed before and during the administration of the survey. Participants' permissions were obtained prior to handing the surveys over to be answered. No physical or psychological pressure was placed on respondents to participate in the survey. Additionally, ethical procedures were followed in

the collection, storage, and preservation of the data. The respondents' identities remained anonymous throughout the survey, while all information provided was kept confidential and secure.

3.5 Data Collection and Analysis

The data provided by respondents on challenges they experienced after embracing Islam was collected quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative method accumulated information via structured questions, where respondents ticked and numbered their answers. However, the qualitative technique acquired the particulars by employing written open-ended questions and one-on-one interviews. Ahmad et al. remark that a quantitative research method explores information in a numerical format, which enables researchers to conduct basic and complex statistical evaluations that consolidate the data. On the contrary, a qualitative methodology represents a naturalistic investigation aimed at understanding social phenomena in their natural context. Qualitative data emphasizes the reasons behind occurrences rather than the perceptions of social processes, which depend on human experiences (2019).

As a result, the technique for this research paradigm integrated a synthesis of positivism and constructivism approaches and utilized a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies in analyzing the statistics. Cohen et al. affirm that positivism relies on observation and reason to comprehend behavior. Thus, explanation is achieved via scientific description (2007). Conversely, constructivism focuses on people's experiences and how they interpret them (Adom et al., 2016). Henceforth, individuals who reverted to Islam recounted their experiences as new Muslims and provided subjective interpretations of their thoughts and perceptions.

This consolidation of methods allowed data to be examined through the logic of triangulation, thereby enhancing the validity, reliability, and depth of the findings. Bogdan and Biklen (2006) comment that researchers employ a combination of inductive and deductive reasoning techniques to mitigate personal biases in their studies. As such, this

research incorporated an inductive methodology, observing the unique experiences of individuals who have reverted to Islam to formulate general findings. Additionally, it employed a deductive approach, testing hypotheses with specific information from new Muslims' experiences.

Moreover, the quantitative system measured the variables, identifying patterns and similarities, which were analyzed using charts and tables. Blaxter et al. (2010) assert that using a quantitative data strategy enhances accuracy, as it utilizes proportions, percentages, central tendency (averages), and dispersion (ranges). Thus, descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were employed to examine the quantitative data methodically. Descriptive statistics aggregated and summarized the data, transforming it into intelligible information. On the other hand, inferential statistics analyzed the outcomes of the sampled population of reverts to Islam and generated broad conclusions regarding the overall population of Muslim reverts in Guyana.

Therefore, to facilitate data tallying, responses for the quantitative questions were coded with numbers, which were then summed up and recorded for analysis. Thereafter, the information was transmitted to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet that assisted in recapitulating and describing the statistics acquired. Pie and bar charts were implemented to compare and contrast categorical and ordinal data responses. Siirtola (2014) explains that pie and bar charts are used for visual observations. For example, pie charts demonstrate the proportion and percentage of a whole, while bar charts compare different categories side by side or one above the other.

The information was subsequently entered into Excel for statistical analysis, during which the frequencies of responses were calculated and compared. The Spearman ranked correlation was employed to examine the correlation coefficient between variables, while the Pearson chi-square test was performed to assess significant differences among participants.

In contrast, the qualitative data was written by respondents on the questionnaires, while the researcher recorded the responses from the one-on-one interviews through written scripts.

Participants' answers were tabulated systematically by organizing the information into thematic tables under various headings. Repeated phrases and patterns were identified and interpreted, as this arrangement enabled a smoother tabulation of the data. Gibbs (2007) asserts that "making comparisons is an important stage of analysis, in which you can get beyond the descriptive level. Tables are a helpful way of laying out your data to facilitate such comparisons…" (2007, p. 88).

The data was then coded using the categories established in this study, such as personal, psychological, social, and religious challenges. Thereafter, an observation of the categories based on thematic coding and comparative methodologies was subjected to content analysis and interpretation, offering clear insight into new Muslims' experiences after embracing Islam. Blaxter et al. suggest that "qualitative data offer more detail [than quantitative data] about the subject under consideration" (2006, p. 212).

3.6 Conclusion

This study utilized a mixed-methods approach to investigate the problems encountered by Guyanese reverts to Islam in Guyana. It applied quantitative and qualitative methodologies to accumulate information on the difficulties new reverts encountered in their journey into Islam. Surveys employing multiple choice, Likert scales, rating scales, and open-ended questions supplied extensive insight into personal, psychological, social, and religious challenges. Additionally, open-ended questions and one-on-one interviews were selected to enhance the data by documenting complex and direct perspectives from reverts' experiences. This technique provided a neutral viewpoint, enabling statistical analysis and thorough examination of individual accounts, which yielded comprehensive insights into the intricacies of the reversion process.

As such, this study employed positivist and constructivist approaches to shape the design and interpretation of the research. It analyzed the data collected using inductive and deductive reasoning to draw meaningful conclusions. Moreover, descriptive and inferential

statistical analyses were implemented to examine the quantitative data, while the qualitative data was analyzed through interpretive and thematic methodologies.

CHAPTER IV

Results and Analysis

The study presents the results collected from the target population under two primary headings: quantitative and qualitative findings. Thereafter, subcategories were created under each heading to provide clarity and facilitate analysis.

4.1 Quantitative Results of Challenges Encountered by New Reverts to Islam

The quantitative results are divided into five subcategories. The first division observed the initial emotions of reverts after they accepted the religion of Islam. The second subtype gathered information on the personal and theological complexities encountered by new Muslims, while the third categorization addressed the psychological impact reverting to Islam possessed on these individuals. Finally, the fourth and fifth subdivisions registered their societal and cultural challenges, respectively.

4.1.1 Initial Experience

New reverts were asked about the circumstances that led them to Islam. Table 1 illustrates a contingency table that displays the categorical variables of genders and the motivating factors for accepting Islam. As observed, respondents were influenced by several elements. The table below demonstrates participants' responses, along with their proportional percentages.

Table 1

Male and Female Motivating Factors for Embracing Islam

Motivating Factors	**Male Participants (24)**	**Female Participants (53)**	**Total Participants (77)**
Personal Spirituality	15 (63%)	25 (47%)	40 (52%)
Influenced by Family / Friends	12 (50%)	17 (32%)	29 (38%)
Curiosity	8 (33%)	15 (28%)	23 (30%)
Marriage	2 (8%)	15 (28%)	17 (22%)

An analysis of the descriptive data reveals that the personal spiritual journey represents the predominant driving factor (52%) for both genders in reverting to Islam. Subsequently, 38% of the respondents reported that encouragement from family and friends motivated them to revert to Islam. However, a lesser number of individuals chose curiosity and marriage as their determining factors, accounting for 30% and 22% of the responses, respectively.

When examining the percentage of each gender separately, it is noted that the most influential element, the spiritual journey, is represented by 63% males and 47% females. This reading suggests that spiritual motivation shows more commonality among men than among women. However, the opposite trend was observed for marriage being an incentive for becoming a Muslim, with males constituting 8% of the target demographic, compared to 28% of females, which accounted for approximately three times more than the proportion of males.

Hence, a chi-square test of independence was conducted to verify the existence of a statistically significant relationship between the genders and reasons for accepting Islam. This statistical analysis is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Chi-square Test of Independence Between Genders and Motivating Factors

Observed Value	**Spirituality**	**Influence**	**Curiosity**	**Marriage**	**Total**
Male	15	12	8	2	37
Female	25	17	15	15	72
Total	40	29	23	17	109
Expected Value	**Spirituality**	**Influence**	**Curiosity**	**Marriage**	**Total**
Male	13.58	9.84	7.81	5.77	37
Female	26.42	19.16	15.19	11.23	72
Total	40	29	23	17	109
p-value		0.20			
Degree of Freedom		3			
Chi-square Value		4.68			
Critical Value		7.815			

Despite the observed value (raw data) displaying differences, the results of the chi-square test indicate that the relationship between gender and the motivating factors for accepting Islam is not statistically significant, as the *p*-value of 0.20 exceeds the significant threshold of 0.05. In addition, the chi-square value of 4.68 is less than the critical value of 7.82. This reading suggests that the correlation between the two variables is insignificant, as gender and inspiration type are independent of each other.

The initial experiences described by reverts upon embracing Islam demonstrate that the majority of participants (n = 61), constituting 79%, reported very positive (n = 36) or positive (n = 25) experiences. However, a lesser number recorded neutral sentiments (n = 10), while a minority of 5% expressed negative emotions, and 3% were very negative about their first encounters.

The bar chart below, in Figure 1, presents a comparison of two statements that aim to gauge reverts' initial perceptions of the hospitality of the Muslim community and their subsequent assessments of the support they received. Participants responded positively to both inquiries. Nonetheless, a greater cohort of individuals (n = 58) expressed feeling welcomed by the Muslim community compared to a lesser number (n = 49) who agreed or strongly agreed that they received sufficient support to enhance their spiritual development.

Despite the substantial overall agreement for both statements, the results suggest that reverts believed Muslims provided a more hospitable atmosphere (n = 58) than the assistance offered for their spiritual growth (n = 49). Additionally, this disparity is reflected in the higher number of neutral and negative responses to the spiritual support statement compared to the affection shown by the Muslims.

Figure 1

Comparison between Feeling Welcomed and Support Offered by the Muslim Community

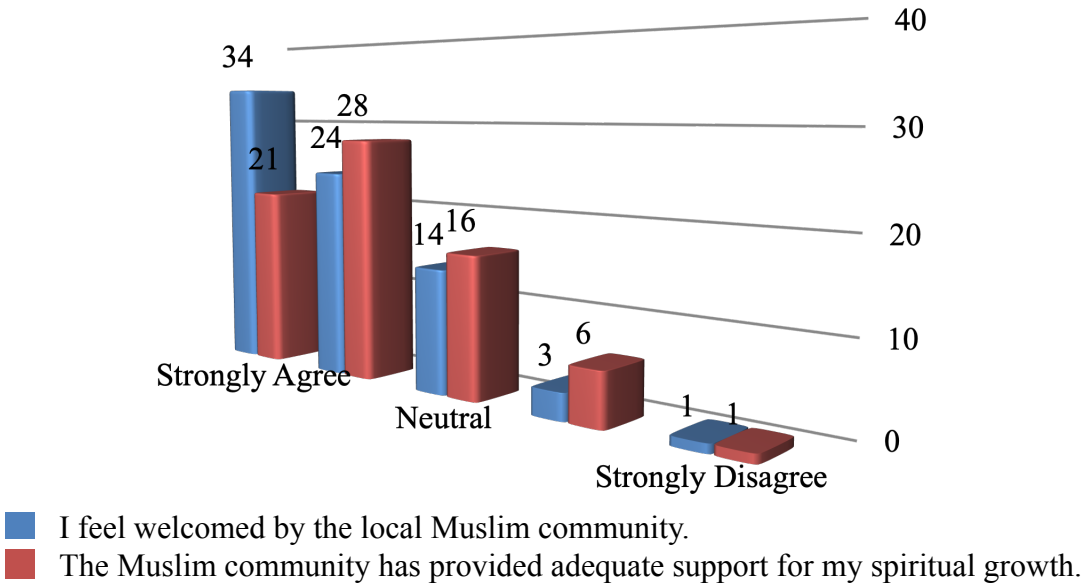
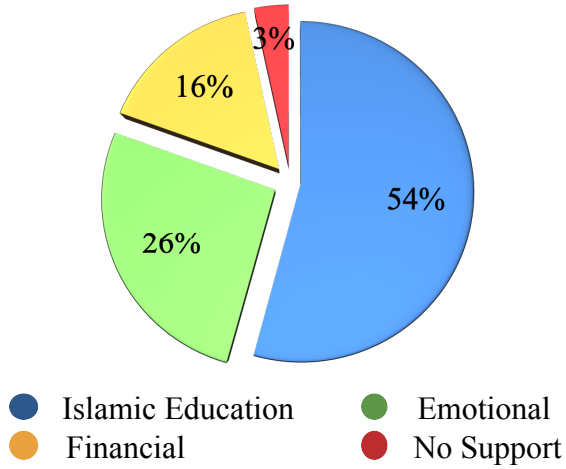


Figure 2 below illustrates the nature of support received from the Muslim community. The distribution in the pie chart highlights that the predominant assistance reverts received was Islamic education (54%), while approximately half that amount (26%) registered that they acquired emotional support. A smaller percentage (16%) reported receiving financial aid, while a minimum of 3% indicated that no support was offered to them by the Muslim community.

Figure 2

Pie Chart Highlighting the Distribution of Support Received by the Muslim Community



4.1.2 Personal and Religious Challenges

Table 3 outlines the frequency (n = 214) of various personal and religious issues experienced by reverts. Learning to read the Qurān in Arabic was reported as the most difficult challenge (n = 61), accounting for 29% of the responses. The second most significant challenge for new reverts was acquiring knowledge of religious practices, as indicated by 44 participants (20%). Subsequently, 42 individuals (19%) reported that reconciling Islamic obligations with daily activities was tedious to manage after accepting Islam. In comparison, 38 individuals (18%) stated that familial conflicts posed challenges for them in their relationships with loved ones. A reduced number of 23 participants (11%) indicated struggles in altering their dietary habits. However, the least challenging aspect was

adopting a Muslim name, as a small number of six individuals (3%) experienced trouble in this regard.

Table 3

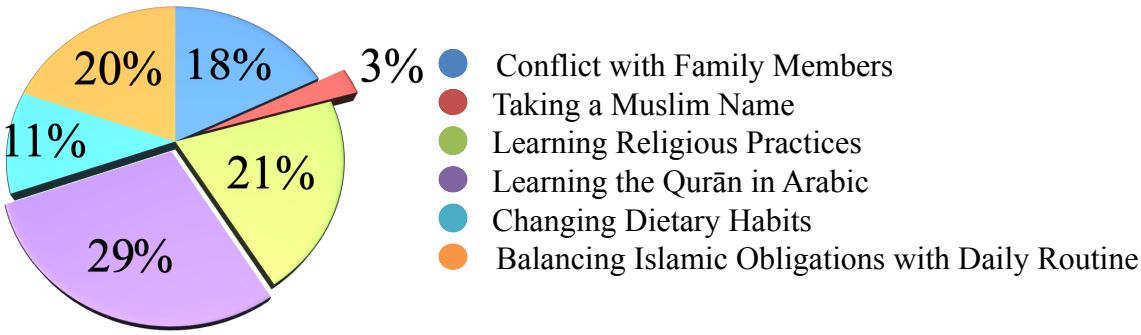
Types of Challenges Reverts Faced

Types of Challenges Experienced by Reverts	Numbers of Responses	Percentage Proportion
Conflict with Family Members	38	18%
Taking a Muslim Name	6	3%
Learning Religious Practices	44	21%
Learning the Qurān in Arabic	61	29%
Changing Dietary Habits	23	11%
Balancing Islamic Obligations with Daily	42	20%
Total Number of Responses	**214**	

Figure 3 below presents a pie chart that depicts the various categories of challenges faced by new reverts in their personal and religious struggles, along with the corresponding percentages of respondents in each category. As observed, reading the Holy Qurān in Arabic posed the most challenges for new Muslims, while adopting a Muslim name was identified as the least arduous. It is noticeable that learning to perform religious practices, such as the five daily prayers (21%), managing Islamic obligations with daily activities (20%), and dealing with familial conflicts (18%) garnered similar responses, indicating that new reverts encountered both internal and external challenges simultaneously. Additionally, the previously mentioned issues appear more challenging for reverts than abstaining from prohibited food.

Figure 3

Personal and Religious Challenges Experienced by New Reverts



In addition, a Likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' was employed to capture participants' reactions to four statements about their personal and religious struggles. Table 4 presents the distribution of their responses, reflecting the spectrum of agreement to disagreement. The first statement inquired about the confidence of reverts in understanding Islamic teachings and practices. The results revealed that 81% of respondents expressed confidence, either by strongly agreeing (36%) or agreeing (45%). In contrast, 10% remained neutral, while 9% indicated a lack of confidence in their comprehension of Islamic doctrines and practices.

The second statement records an almost even distribution of agreement and disagreement from new reverts regarding their estrangement from previous social circles after accepting Islam. A total of 36% of the respondents either strongly agreed (10%) or agreed (26%) that they experience feelings of isolation. In contrast, 43% disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 21% maintained a neutral stance.

However, when exploring the influence of Islam on their self-esteem and purpose in life, a significant portion of participants (n = 62) responded affirmatively, with 40 strongly agreeing and 22 agreeing that accepting Islam had a positive impact on their self-worth. This combination represented a significant number (86%) of the responses. Of the remaining 14%, 10% expressed neutrality, while a minimal number, 4%, disagreed with the statement.

Moreover, when examining their views on the quantity of new information they are required to learn about Islam, a substantial proportion, two-thirds of the respondents (65%), reported feeling overwhelmed by it. Meanwhile, 17% remained neutral, and 19% expressed a contrary perspective.

Table 4

Reverts' Personal and Religious Struggles Responses on a Likert Scale

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
I am confident in my understanding of Islamic teachings and practices.	27 (36%)	33 (45%)	7 (10%)	4 (5%)	3 (4%)	74
I often feel isolated from my previous social circle since reverting to Islam.	7 (10%)	19 (26%)	15 (21%)	17 (24%)	14 (19%)	72
Accepting Islam has positively impacted my overall sense of self-worth and purpose.	40 (56%)	22 (30%)	7 (10%)	1 (1%)	2 (3%)	72
I feel overwhelmed by the amount of new information I need to learn about Islam.	18 (26%)	27 (39%)	12 (17%)	9 (13%)	4 (6%)	70

For further analysis, a Pearson correlation test was conducted between two variables: 'the confidence of new reverts in understanding Islamic teachings and practices' and 'reverts' perception of the positive impact Islam possesses on their well-being.' The findings in Table 5 reveal a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient ($r = 0.329$, $p = .006$) represents a moderate positive correlation, indicating that as reverts' confidence in comprehending Islamic teachings rises, their perception that Islam had a positive impact on their lives increases.

Table 5

Pearson Correlation Test between Two Variables of Personal and Religious Challenges

Correlations			
Confidence in understanding Islamic teachings and practices		Confidence in understanding Islamic teachings and practices	Islam has impacted revert's life positively
	Pearson Correlation	1	.329**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.006
	N	72	69
Islam has impacted revert's life positively	Pearson Correlation	.329**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.006	
	N	69	73
**** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**			

4.1.3 Psychological Challenges

Participants were requested to rank five forms of psychological encounters on a scale of 1 (most challenging) to 5 (least challenging). Table 6 displays their choices for the most difficult encounter compared to the least difficult after reverting to Islam. The data was then analyzed in an Excel spreadsheet to determine the ranking positions, as shown in Table 7.

Among the five categories of psychological challenges listed, 'changing old habits' ranked number one as the most arduous for those who have reverted to Islam. Subsequently, adjusting to their new religious identity was registered as the next challenging issue. Thereafter, managing stress related to their new religion and experiencing isolation from family, friends, or society acquired the third and fourth ratings, respectively, as they were noted as less problematic than the two previous concerns. However, the participants did not

encounter much rejection from the non-Muslim community in Guyana. As such, it was deemed the least challenging matter for the respondents. The information presented in Table 7 is represented in the accompanying bar chart below (Figure 4) for enhanced visualization of the obtained data.

Table 6

Reverts' Experiences for the Type of Psychological Challenges Encountered

Challenges	Most Challenging	More Challenging	Challenging	Less Challenging	Least Challenging
New Identity	17	15	15	8	16
Rejection	17	10	10	15	19
Isolation	14	12	16	12	17
Stress	17	9	15	12	18
Change Old Habits	25	9	17	9	11

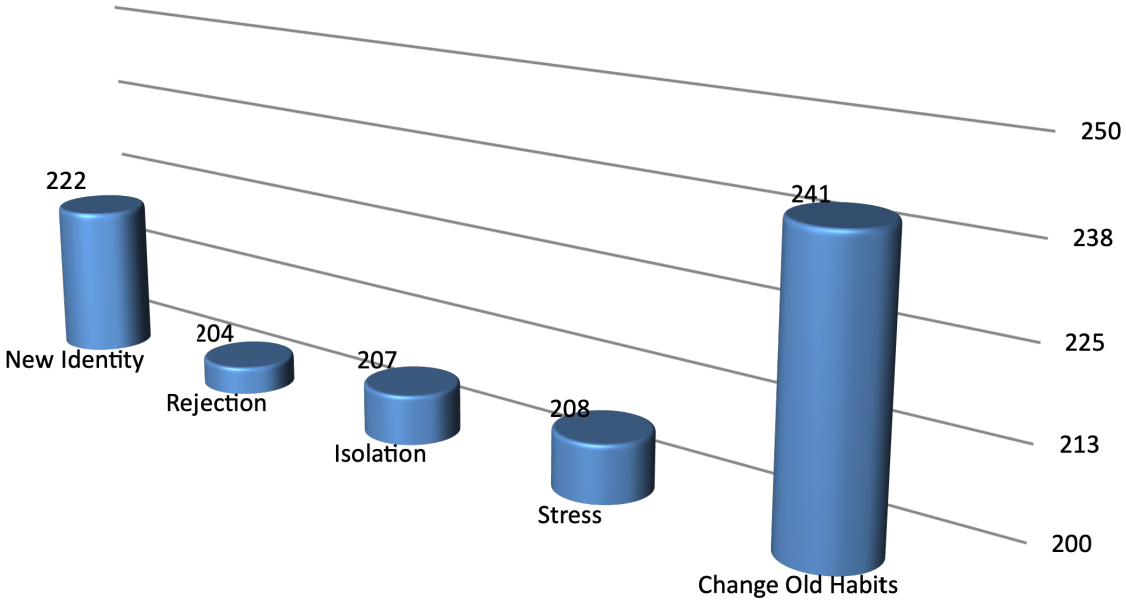
Table 7

A Ranking Tabulation of the Type of Psychological Challenges Experienced by Reverts

Challenges	Total	Rank
New Identity	222	2
Rejection	204	5
Isolation	207	4
Stress	208	3
Change Old Habits	241	1

Figure 4

Bar Chart Displaying the Ranking Status of Psychological Challenges



4.1.4 Societal Challenges

Participants described the attitude of the non-Muslim Guyanese society toward their acceptance of Islam. Among the 77 respondents, 38 (49%) exhibit neutral attitudes. This response indicates that approximately half of the target demographic did not encounter positive or negative engagement from the non-Muslim segment of their society. However, one-third (n = 25) of the participants reported that the non-Muslim society was accepting of their reversion, while a minority (17%) recorded that they encountered hostile attitudes.

When asked about encountering prejudice related to their Islamic apparel, such as the hijab, kufi, or thoub, 34 respondents (44%) affirmed having experienced discrimination, while 43 (56%) replied in the negative. This data suggests that almost half of the participants have faced societal challenges relating to the visual expression of their religious identity. Notably, no participant selected 'not applicable,' which implies that all respondents wear

Islamic attire either partially or permanently. However, out of the 34 participants who replied in the affirmative, 30 were females, accounting for 88% of those who acknowledged this form of discrimination. The chi-square test in Table 8 below confirmed that the discrimination female reverts faced due to their Islamic attire represented a statistically significant figure, $\chi^2(1) = 10.69$, $p < .001$, which established that the p-value of 0.001 is less than the conventional level of 0.05.

Table 8

Pearson Chi-square Test on Discrimination in Wearing Islamic Attire

Test Statistics	
	Have you experienced discrimination wearing Islamic attire?
Pearson Chi-Square	10.685
df	1
P-value Asymp. Sig.	<.001

Table 9 below displays the results of a Likert scale that collected information on various forms of societal encounters experienced by reverts. The first statement inquired about the respondents' relationships with their loved ones after they had entered Islam. The table illustrates that despite approximately half of the respondents (49% — 15 males and 21 females) indicating disagreement (strongly disagreed or disagreed) that their association with family and friends has been weakened, a notable quantity of one-third (33%) of the participants experienced strained connections with loved ones (3 males and 21 females). However, 19% of the respondents were indecisive or had mixed experiences regarding their relationships, as they remained neutral on the topic.

Similarly, the following statement, ‘Non-Muslim friends have not been understanding and supportive of my reversion,’ reflects varied experiences among participants based on the

responses received. Thirty of the respondents (39%) showed their agreement with the statement (strongly agreeing or agreeing). Conversely, 35% rejected the assertion, as they believed their friends were empathetic and supportive of their reversion. The outstanding 26% remained neutral. However, the findings revealed that a greater proportion of females (41%) concurred with the statement compared to those who disagreed (31%), while 36% of males agreed and 54% disagreed.

The final statement solicited respondents' perspectives about their perceptions of security when publicly expressing their Muslim identity. The data presented in Table 9 revealed that a significant number of individuals, 51 (69%), disagree or strongly disagree with the statement, indicating that the majority of reverts (79% males and 63% females) felt safe displaying their Muslim characteristics in public. On the contrary, a smaller segment of 15% indicated that they had experienced safety concerns, agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement, while 16% of the participants adopted a neutral position.

Table 9

Responses of Reverts' Societal Encounters on a Likert Scale

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Reverting to Islam has weakened my relationships with family or friends.	11 (15%)	13 (18%)	14 (19%)	17 (23%)	19 (26%)	74
Non-Muslim friends have not been understanding and supportive of my reversion.	14 (18%)	16 (21%)	19 (26%)	16 (21%)	11 (14%)	76
I don't feel safe expressing my Muslim identity in public settings.	2 (3%)	9 (12%)	12 (16%)	23 (31%)	28 (38%)	74

Table 10 presents a chi-square goodness-of-fit test to determine whether the distribution of responses to the statement, 'I don't feel safe expressing my Muslim identity in public settings,' deviates substantially from the anticipated replies. The test yielded a statistically

significant result, $\chi^2(4) = 29.47$, $p < .001$, which indicated that the p-value of 0.001 is lower than the conventional level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis that all responses across the five categories are equal is rejected. This result suggested that the observed responses significantly deviated from the expected even distribution of 15, indicating that a substantial number of reverts feel safe expressing their Muslim identity in public spaces in Guyana.

Table 10

Chi-square Goodness-of-fit Test

Test Statistics	
	I don't feel safe expressing my Muslim identity in public settings.
Chi-Square	29.467
df	4
P-value Asymp. Sig.	<.001
Expected Frequency	15

4.1.5 Cultural Challenges

Reverts were asked whether they experienced challenges altering their pre-Islamic cultural behaviors that conflicted with Islamic teachings. Table 11 demonstrates that a considerable proportion (72%) of respondents indicated that they encountered difficulties changing their cultural behaviors to adhere to Islamic values. Contrarily, 28% of the surveyed population denied experiencing obstacles in modifying their cultural habits. Furthermore, it is observed that a greater percentage of males (79%) struggle with abandoning cultural practices that contradict Islamic principles in contrast to females (69%).

Table 11

Responses on Cultural Challenges by Male and Female Participants

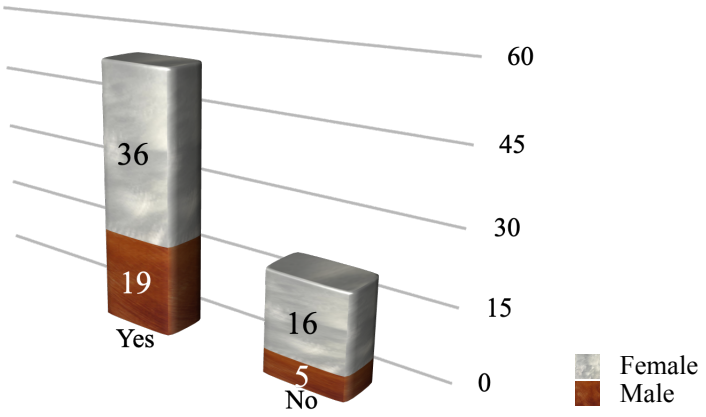
Cultural Challenges	Male (24)	Female (52)	Total Participants (76)
Yes	19 (79%)	36 (69%)	55 (72%)
No	5 (21%)	16 (31%)	21 (28%)
Total	24	52	76

The stacked bar chart in Figure 5 below illustrates the number of individuals who acknowledged or refuted that modifying their pre-Islamic cultural behavior created difficulties for them. The chart shows that out of the 76 respondents, more than twice as many participants (n = 55) reported encountering cultural challenges compared to those who were not affected (n = 21).

Moreover, it was observed that cultural challenges affected a larger proportion of male participants than females. Among the 24 males, 19 (79%) reported experiencing difficulties in changing cultural behaviors, compared to 5 (21%) who responded negatively. This result implies that males were over three times more likely to affirm facing cultural challenges than to deny them. In contrast, 36 out of 52 females (69%) confirmed such difficulties, while approximately one-third of the female respondents (16, 31%) negated it. These figures suggest that, although both groups encountered cultural obstacles, these issues remain more pronounced among male reverts in this study.

Figure 5

Stacked bar chart Displaying Gender's Responses on Cultural Challenges



Additionally, participants were asked to identify elements of their pre-Islamic culture that posed challenges after embracing Islam. Table 12 represents the observed number of responses (125) by males and females across four categories: Festivals and Celebrations, Social Activities, Dressing Habits, and Traditional Food. It depicts the frequency of selecting the kind of cultural difficulties encountered by new reverts and their corresponding percentages of each type. The bar chart in Figure 5 below provides a further visual representation of this information.

Table 12

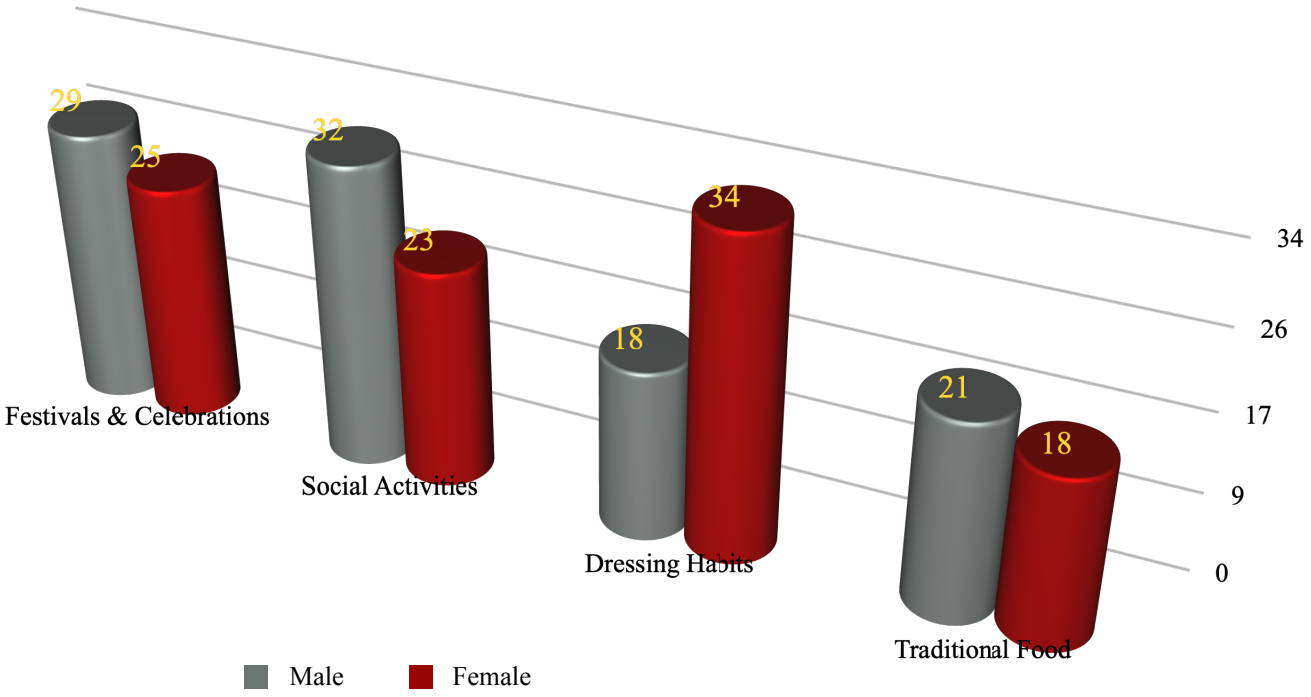
Percentage and Frequency of Cultural Challenges by Male and Female Respondents

	Festivals & Celebrations	Social Activities	Dressing Habits	Traditional Food	Total Responses
Male	10 (29%)	11 (32%)	6 (18%)	7 (21%)	34
Female	23 (25%)	21 (23%)	31 (34%)	16 (18%)	91
Total	33	31	37	24	125

Figure 6 reveals that the most common cultural challenges male reverts struggled with were social activities (32%), followed by festivals and celebrations (29%). On the contrary, the most prominent cultural struggle for females was modifying their attire (34%). Subsequently, festivals and celebrations (25%) were recorded as the next major challenge for women. Nevertheless, both males (21%) and females (18%) experienced comparable challenges in abstaining from traditional foods forbidden in Islam, while altering dressing habits posed the least obstacle for men (18%).

Figure 6

Group Illustrations of the Percentages of Cultural Challenges Experienced by Both Genders



4.2 Qualitative Results of Challenges Encountered by New Reverts to Islam

Respondents shared information about their experiences before and after accepting Islam as their new religion. These details were consolidated into five categories. The first section addresses the motivational factors that lead to the acceptance of Islam. The second and third divisions supply elements that new reverts find most gratifying and most challenging following their entry into Islam. The fourth section examines the relevant networks of assistance that Muslim communities could provide for reverts. Thereafter, in the concluding category, informants expressed their perspective on whether to abandon Islam.

4.2.1 Motivations for Accepting Islam

Participants were inspired by a number of reasons for accepting Islam. One of the pertinent factors was registered as the logical and intellectual appeal of Islam. Several reverts

explained that Islamic teachings "just made sense" to them, especially when compared to other faiths. One individual stated, "I tried to disapprove it and failed miserably. So, I simply had no other choice than to submit." Another participant explained that his attempt to learn Christian doctrine was unsuccessful. He recorded, "When I asked the pastors why they're worshipping Jesus and to explain the Trinity, they were unable to provide an answer, which raised more questions for me…"

Another inspiring factor originated with the desire for personal and spiritual changes. One respondent expressed, "I needed change in my life," while another mentioned, "Seeking to live a life guided by Islamic principles and to gain a deeper understanding of life's purpose." Two participants mentioned that dreams were their initial indication of a spiritual awakening.

Additionally, the exposure to Islamic concepts enlightened individuals to the uniqueness of this religion. For example, one participant recounted, "One day while my sister was playing a lecture, I overheard what Islam says about life after death in the grave and the hereafter. Right then something awakened in me…" Another respondent stated, "The concept of God caught my attention."

The influence of family and the desire for cohesion among relatives played a significant role, as several respondents embraced Islam, following in the footsteps of their family members who had previously accepted the faith. One participant shared, "I wanted my family to be as one, so I decided to come to Islam." Another said, "My sons used to go to madrasa and would come home and tell me what they learned."

Furthermore, the exposure to Islamic culture and values inspired individuals to embrace Islam. Participants cited modesty, the Islamic dress code, and community support as propelling factors. They noted that "the way the Muslim sisters dress," "the brotherhood," and even the influence of "a movie [about the] Sahara Desert" exemplify elements that fostered the acceptance of Islam.

4.2.2 Reverts' Reflections on the Most Rewarding Aspects of Islam

Participants experienced numerous gratifying sentiments after embracing Islam. Their accounts reflect spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and social satisfaction. Several participants expressed that accepting Islam provided them with the opportunity to develop a relationship with their creator, who has chosen to guide them. They mentioned statements such as, "I get to learn about Allāh and put my trust in Him," and "The relationship I've developed with Allāh was most rewarding." Those who felt that their greatest reward was being chosen for guidance stated, "The fact that Allāh chose me and granted me the mercy of guidance" and "He found me lost and guided me." These comments reflect the spiritual fulfillment reverts acquire in their quest to connect with their Lord.

Another satisfying aspect of accepting Islam for reverts was recorded as the transformation of the inner self. Participants described the feeling of serenity they discovered after embracing Islam. This inner peace enabled them to recognize their purpose in life. Statements such as "I found peace in myself and strengthened my faith" and "Understanding my true purpose" reflect the consolidation of spirituality and the reconstruction of a new identity. Others noted that Islam provides "a new life with meaning." It allows them to "see life totally different" and approach the struggles of life with "peace and tranquility." Additionally, they described the humility and patience they found in Islam, stating, "I like the person I am becoming, more forgiving, humble, patient, and tolerable. And best of all, I trust God in whatever situation He has planned for me," and "I have found patience. I'm now a more humble human being."

Similarly, participants emphasized the promise of divine blessings and rewards in the hereafter as fulfilling components for reverts. They expressed that the new path they have chosen would lead to spiritual achievements, stating, "The blessings as a Muslim would help you attain paradise," "Allāh indeed rewards you for your good deeds," and "Heaven is the second most rewarding factor after guidance." Additionally, participants emphasized the comprehensive advantages one may acquire in Islam. One revert mentioned that the most gratifying aspect represents the "spiritual and financial benefits one may achieve

simultaneously." Another stated, "The most rewarding thing about my journey as a Muslim is that I've become a better person. I've received the blessings of Allāh. It's very rewarding spiritually, physically, and financially."

Moreover, reverts pointed out the enjoyment of shared religious practices with Muslim family members as a rewarding aspect of embracing Islam. They admitted that it strengthened their family relationships. One participant revealed, "Practicing the same religion as my wife allows us to help and encourage each other." Others remarked, "Enjoy all the celebrations with my family, especially Ramadān, which is very rewarding," and "To practice the same religion as my husband and to grow together." On the same note, participants acknowledged the supportive nature of the Muslim community as a rewarding element of their journey in Islam. They affirmed that the communal bond reinforced their sense of identity and belonging by mentioning statements such as, "All the love and support from the community help me to deal with the loneliness I feel sometimes" and "Getting to meet supportive brothers and sisters makes me feel as part of the Muslim family."

Several participants commented on the systematic direction offered by Islamic teachings and practices as a rewarding factor. One individual described Islam as "a well-defined moral framework." Others indicated that acquiring Islamic knowledge and accomplishing self-discipline yielded meaningful rewards. They noted statements such as "Islamic teaching brings discipline to the mind and body," "I love that Islam answers most of my unanswered questions, and the Qurān is very clear," and "Learning Islam is my biggest achievement." Furthermore, respondents believed the Islamic dress code represents a satisfactory aspect of reversion, as it defines their external expressions of faith. A female participant related that "wearing the hijab on a full-time basis" was one of the most rewarding aspects of Islam for her. Another expressed joy in "modest dressing and following Islamic rules.”

4.2.3 Reverts' Reflections on the Most Challenging Aspects of Islam

Reverts who entered Islam in Guyana encountered various challenges after their reversion. They shared several of these difficulties, which encompass social, psychological, religious, linguistic, and practical domains.

Familial conflict and inadequate support from relatives emerged as significant issues among the problems faced by reverts. Participants reported being the only Muslim in their family, while others recorded being rejected by family members. For example, one individual stated that the most challenging aspect of Islam resulted in "being the only Muslim in my family." Others expressed the psychological pressure they endured without family support, stating, "Having my family reject me and not understanding my reasons for accepting Islam," "My family was against me," and "Conflict with my loved ones strained our relationship."

Others conveyed the difficulties of adhering to Islamic practices while maintaining close relationships with non-Muslim relatives. Responses such as "Keeping a connection with some non-Muslim relatives was difficult because their way of life is different from mine" and "Maintaining my religion without the support of a Muslim family" recorded the struggles encountered by reverts. Several individuals reported feeling lonely, misunderstood, or spiritually drained. One respondent stated, "It feels lonely being in a family of non-Muslims, despite having Muslim friends," while another admitted, "Since I came to Islam, my challenges never stop. It is one after another until today." Thus, these comments reveal the impact of being isolated and not receiving the support needed from loved ones.

Another struggle faced by reverts involved acquiring Islamic knowledge, especially the aspects of Islam that require them to learn in Arabic. Several participants observed that acquiring the ability to read Arabic for the recital of the Holy Qurān and the daily prayers presented challenges. Statements such as "My biggest challenge is understanding and reading Arabic words from the Qurān," "Learning and remembering the Qurān in Arabic," and "Learning to pray properly by saying the Arabic prayers" demonstrate the kind of linguistic obstacles faced by reverts. In addition, participants discussed the difficulties they faced in

adhering to Islamic principles, such as performing the daily Salāh (prayer), fasting during the month of Ramadān, and balancing their behavior with Islamic values. Comments like "Being disciplined enough to perform my Salāh on time," "Maintaining every action in accordance with Islam," and "Keep up with the prayers…" expose the struggles reverts undergo in following a new schedule. Others admitted that persistence in the faith placed emotional and physical difficulties upon them. One respondent mentioned, "Remaining steadfast upon the religion has been an ongoing struggle for me."

Similarly, reverts faced behavioral challenges in abandoning pre-Islamic habits and values that contradict Islamic teachings. Several participants alluded to the difficulties of renouncing socially ingrained practices and prior religious convictions, such as music, non-marital relationships, and social interactions. They mentioned "having to move past the beliefs of my previous religion (Christianity)," "stopping my old habits," and "hanging out with my friends." These sentiments reveal the obstacles reverts experienced in the reconstruction process of their journey into Islam. Correspondingly, the reverts encountered practical obstacles. For example, maintaining a halal diet proved challenging in environments where halal food lacked availability or where cultural eating habits conflicted with Islamic dietary rules. Participants reported difficulties in "ensuring they eat halal food" and "changing their traditional food habits." Likewise, female respondents reported economic strain in adopting Islamic attire, noting, "I don't have enough money to afford abayas" and "Not having enough money to buy clothes."

On the other hand, female participants who adopted a visible Islamic identity described the discrimination and discomfort they encountered. They recorded statements such as "I'm being judged by my appearance," "The public views you differently when dressed as a Muslim," and "Non-Muslims pick on you and call you bad names." Furthermore, one respondent reflected on the racism she faced at her workplace and the conflict she endured with family members after wearing the hijab. Another indicated, "I want to wear hijab full time, but I'm scared of the judgment from coworkers and neighbors."

Finally, reverts recognized the importance of choosing a compatible spouse, as the marital relationship represents an integral aspect of Islamic life. However, new Muslims experienced difficulties in this regard, as their connection with other Muslim communities was limited. One participant distinctly mentioned that "finding a suitable spouse" posed a challenge for him after accepting Islam.

4.2.4 Reverts' Responses to the Support Desired from the Muslim Community

Participants in this study shared forms of support they desired to receive from the Muslim community. The responses highlighted material and non-material necessities, ranging from educational and spiritual support to emotional encouragement and community inclusion.

One of the most mentioned supports needed was recorded as tailored educational systems that catered to new and elderly reverts. Several participants advanced a desire for more classes at masjids, stating, "We need more Islamic classes," while others clarified the need for structured teaching programs that cater to various learning paces. One participant emphasized the importance of providing differentiated forms of teaching. She expressed, "More customized teaching for the older reverts. We need a slower pace." Another stated, "The support I need is not forcing too much information on me, since I'm just learning. It could be overwhelming, especially coming from a life opposite to Islamic teachings." Other respondents required more explicit prayer instructions, assistance in reciting the Holy Qurān in Arabic, and guidance on the correct Sunnah. Participants requested "better and effective knowledge sharing" and "more introductory classes to teach new Muslims the religion."

Several reverts pointed out the need for emotional and moral support from traditional Muslims, especially among women. They employed phrases such as "emotional support," "moral support," and "more welcoming approach to new sisters." These sentiments demonstrate the need for compassion and encouragement from Muslim communities. Additionally, female participants sought assistance in "counseling and psychological support for women because marriage is so easy for the Muslim men. They take advantage and tend to have multiple wives even when they can't afford it. Those who are strong leave, but those

who are forced to stay sometimes feel broken." Another respondent emphasized the need for "marriage counseling." One individual suggested that the community "support each other even when they have a downfall; help them up instead of being judgmental."

Likewise, participants underlined the need for spiritual reinforcement by motivating and encouraging them to remain steadfast on the path of Islam. For example, sisters requested assistance in helping them maintain their hijabs, while others solicited guidelines for establishing their prayer routines. Statements such as "More spiritual support is needed" and "Teach more about following Islam and how to keep the hijab on" illustrate the external pressure that may affect their spiritual growth.

In addition, participants discussed the financial difficulties they encountered and sought practical assistance. This request was noted among low-income families and single parents. Responses such as "We are not rich; I would like some donations of Islamic clothes" and "Any help would be OK for me and my two sons" illustrate that economic constraints may impede religious practice. Others requested from the Muslim community "Islamic financing for financial stability" and "help for the less fortunate families." These requests point to the importance of material support that would facilitate reverts in strengthening their new faith.

Stronger community bonds and a sense of belonging were recorded as added support mechanism, as participants expressed a need for unity, togetherness, and a supportive social environment. One individual noted, "I feel like Muslims can be more supportive by being friendly to a new revert. Talk to them, help them however they are able to, and include them in their circles." Others stressed the importance of "more family activities to build Islamic communities" and "programs to keep youths involved and active." On the contrary, a few participants mentioned the presence of racial or class divisions in the community and called for "more togetherness apart from race and wealth diversion." These findings underscore that participants desire the opportunity to be included in Muslim society and to build trusting, warm relationships that enable them to feel welcomed and valued.

Nevertheless, a subset of the participants expressed gratitude for the support they have received. They recorded statements such as "I get a lot of support from the masjid. I am content," and "I couldn't ask for more. The rest is up to me now." These words demonstrate that while challenges exist among reverts, others have successfully integrated into supportive communities.

4.2.5 Reverts' Perspectives on Departing from Islam

Participants were asked whether they had ever contemplated departing from Islam. Their responses demonstrated their resilience and commitment to the religion, as all males unanimously expressed a negative response, confirming their adherence to the faith. However, four out of fifty-three female participants acknowledged experiencing such thoughts at specific points in their lives for various reasons.

One of the factors mentioned for considering abandoning Islam was noted as family disapproval. One individual shared, "Yes, the first time I thought of leaving Islam was because of my family's rejection." According to this assertion, reverts may feel insecure due to estrangement and a lack of support from loved ones.

Another participant expressed that external criticism and cultural misunderstandings of the religion caused doubts in her mind. She reflected on the impact of a family's comment: "My cousin told me, 'I would never want to be a Muslim. The men in that religion don't like their women.' Eventually, I realized she doesn't truly understand."

This comment illustrates how misconceptions and anti-Islamic sentiments may plant suspicions. Thereafter, the participant described the continuous spiritual battles she faced in maintaining a firm religious conviction. She stated, "I also feel like giving up a few times when I feel I'm falling back into my past sins... I often feel like I'm not doing enough to please Allāh, but Allāh loves little baby steps." This response captures the inner conflict between striving for righteousness and battling self-doubt. It reveals the spiritual maturity of the participant, who recognized that progress occurs gradually and that Allāh values sincere

effort. Rather than leaving Islam, she reaffirmed her love for it and asserted, "I love Islam, and I wouldn't want to trade this blessed guidance for the world!"

A further concern that emerged was recorded as the internal hurt and misguidance manifested by other Muslims, especially in issues regarding women's rights. A female participant noted, “Yes, I did, when Muslims used the shariah for justifying their wrongdoings against me. It happens a lot to women going through a divorce." Thus, this statement indicates the marginalization or mistreatment experienced within the Muslim community.

In contrast to this occurrence, one respondent recounted how a Muslim's generosity prevented her from leaving Islam, which marked a turning point in her life. She stated, “Yes, but a very nice sister talked to me, and I'm still here, and I'm not leaving." This statement emphasizes the importance of compassion and mentorship within the Muslim community, as one's faith may be restored through a single pleasant encounter.

Nevertheless, several participants expressed their unwavering conviction to remain Muslims. One individual remarked, “No, to leave Islam is to doom my soul after clear guidance has come to me. I am sorry, but I can't take no burning in Hellfire. I don't like pain." Another participant asserted, "No, leaving Islam would mean forgetting who I am." These statements reveal that participants considered religion an essential element for their spiritual well-being and protection from the punishment of the afterlife.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

5.1 Restatement of the Research Question

This study examined the solitary aspect of reverting to Islam. Its primary objectives surrounded the challenges faced by new reverts after embracing Islam in Guyana. As such, this chapter discusses the results concerning the central questions that guided its investigation. The questions that were explored addressed the following issues:

- Specific challenges new Muslims in Guyana encounter after embracing Islam
- The underlying factors that contributed to these challenges
- The impact these challenges imposed on the reverts' religious identity and their efforts to integrate into the Muslim community
- The implications of documenting and addressing the experiences of new Muslims in Guyana

This chapter connects the empirical data with existing literature and theoretical frameworks. It interprets and analyses the findings of the study in relation to the research questions that contextualized the experiences of new Muslims in Guyana. The discussion explores how reverts navigate religious identity and practices with societal perceptions in a setting marked by ethnic and religious diversity.

Furthermore, this chapter points out the importance of raising awareness of reverts' experiences and the benefits of addressing their needs within supportive structures. In addition, this discourse establishes these findings within the scholarly domain of reversion and its challenges in the Caribbean context.

5.2 Discussion of the Findings

5.2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the primary findings of this study on the challenges encountered by new Muslim reverts in Guyana, based on the quantitative and qualitative data collected. The discourse is categorized into five main sections: Internal Transformation, Psychological Struggles, Religious Struggles, Social and Cultural Struggles, and Gender Comparison, with selective subheadings. The discussion is organized around main themes that correspond with the research objectives and are supported by the existing literature.

5.2.2 Internal Transformation

Reverts embracing Islam in Guyana were motivated by various reasons, including spiritual quests, influence from loved ones, curiosity, and the desire for marriage. Despite the cause, their initial experiences in the faith were reported as having favorable emotions by the respondents. Subsequently, the quantitative results indicated that Islam had a positive impact on participants' lives, as a substantial number of reverts affirmed that their confidence and purpose for living had gained renewed meaning. Similarly, the qualitative responses highlighted that participants described an awareness of spiritual growth and a moral direction that Islam has instilled in them.

The findings revealed that new reverts underwent an internal transformation, providing psychological and spiritual benefits. This metamorphosis corroborates Zebiri's (2008) assertion that transitioning to Islam entails a moral and psychological reorientation. As such, converting from one system to another provides a renewed spectrum that redirects an individual's perception and personal identity. According to Lofland and Stark (1965, p. 862), "when a person gives up one such perspective or ordered view of the world for another, we refer to this process as conversion," a definition that reflects participants' experiences of redefining their purpose and identity. Thus, the spiritual connection that reverts discovered with their Creator reinforced their conviction in Islam and enabled the construction of a new identity that transcends their former orientation (Simonsohn, 2017). Moreover, the results

support the notion that individuals derive a sense of security and solidarity from group associations, which enhances their self-respect and reduces psychological pressure (Ali, 1994). This outcome aligns with Social Identity Theory, which emphasizes the importance of group affiliation in fostering psychological stability and self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

The data observed gender differences in religious stability. The total number of male participants affirmed no desire to abandon the faith. However, four of the fifty-three female participants expressed their desire to leave. Nevertheless, none of them acted on this sentiment. Despite moments of doubt, their conviction in the veracity of Islam remained firm. The reasons provided by these individuals as key factors for such a tendency include family rejection, social pressure, and unjust treatment. As a result, female reverts struggled to balance their religious beliefs with the demands of society. This observation corresponds with the perspectives of Ussif et al. (2020), that female reverts encounter societal and familial pressures, indicating that identity reformation is mediated by external relational dynamics.

The internal metamorphosis of reverts in Guyana exemplifies the personal benefits of spiritual conviction and the challenges of maintaining this new identity in unsupportive environments. These results emphasize that spirituality functions as a protective factor in maintaining religious stability. Additionally, the results highlight that physical adjustments are required for upholding an Islamic lifestyle. However, men and women experienced this changing phenomenon differently, indicating that gender influences the manner in which reverts cultivate their spiritual perseverance and assimilate into the religion. Furthermore, the outcome points to the importance of implementing community-based programs and activities that emphasize spiritual development, mentorship, and personal reflection, as such initiatives may reinforce long-term resilience in new Muslims in contexts where external pressures threaten their convictions.

5.2.3 Psychological Struggles

Individuals who reverted to Islam experience an identity reconstruction that redefines their beliefs, lifestyle, and feelings of belonging. Although several reverts stated that they

discovered spiritual enlightenment and comfort in renewing their faith, others resonated with feelings of ambivalence and uncertainty, as the process of transitioning from one way of life to another generated skepticism and challenges. Similarly, Kose (1994) noted the internal and external conflicts inherent in this identity shift. According to Uchendu (2010), such transformation encompasses spiritual, social, and cultural changes as new beliefs and habits replace prior customs and practices. Winkelman (2017, p. 121) described this multifaceted experience as 'cultural shock' that stems from 'psychophysiological and sociocultural perspectives.' The religion of Islam not only represents the spiritual domain of one's existence, but it transcends every aspect of a Muslim's life, including social relations, cultural expressions, ethical conduct, and daily practices. As a result, the transition from one life structure to another creates feelings of indifference that affect both new reverts and those around them.

The quantitative data established that reverts in Guyana experienced this phenomenon, as it was ranked second among psychological encounters. The qualitative data revealed recurring themes of loneliness during reverts' transition process, as they were isolated from their non-Muslim families and friends who failed to comprehend their decision to revert to Islam. In other cases, participants represented the sole Muslims in their families, receiving little or no support from loved ones during this critical period. Additionally, Muslim communities and organizations rendered little assistance in curbing the feelings of isolation.

These findings suggest that identity reconstruction, emotions of isolation, and struggling with the process of integrating new social and religious practices are interdependent processes. As a result, the struggles of embracing a new identity and the experiences of solitude hindered reverts' ability to integrate into the Muslim community. According to Kassim et al. (2013), Malaysian reverts experienced similar difficulties, while Uchendu (2010) documented comparable internal conflicts among Igbo reverts.

Thus, new reverts may realize that they are situated between two spectrums of society: their pre-Islamic circles and their new religious community. This liminal position of isolation may create psychological strain and generate fear of rejection and judgment from Muslims

and non-Muslims. Reverts may experience vulnerability and struggle to establish trust in new social and religious relationships. Such tensions may affect reverts' self-esteem, religious confidence, and long-term spiritual stability.

Addressing these challenges requires individuals' resilience and structured community interventions, such as mentorship, inclusive programs, social events, and safe spaces where reverts could seek clarification and support. Additionally, Muslim members should create a warm environment in which reverts feel comfortable embracing the Muslim society as full members. Consequently, these findings illustrate that stability in embracing a new identity extends beyond internal processes. It is shaped by wider social structures and cultural environments (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

5.2.4 Religious Struggles

New reverts to Islam in Guyana experienced difficulties fulfilling their religious obligations, especially during the initial stages of their journey. Several participants reported challenges related to learning and practicing their Islamic duties, such as insufficient knowledge, difficulties with Arabic, perfecting daily Salāh, cultural conflicts, and finding suitable spouses.

5.2.4.1 Insufficient Islamic Knowledge. Similar to other reverts in various parts of the world, Guyanese reverts encounter religious struggles that affect their Islamic practices and integration process. One of the primary obstacles reported in this study emerged from insufficient Islamic knowledge. Although a substantial number of the participants indicated that they had received educational support from the Muslim community, several respondents expressed feelings of limitation when attempting to comprehend Islamic principles and legislation. Reverts raised the need for additional structured Islamic classes and differentiated modes of dissemination, which cater to the needs of new and elderly reverts.

These findings suggest that, although Islamic educational services may be available, a gap exists between reverts' enthusiasm for learning and the availability of these services. Additionally, the applicability of the educational services provided may not be tailored to

address the unique needs of new reverts in a minority-Muslim context. These issues reflect the viewpoints of Rasip et al. (2025), who concur that inadequate access to knowledge may engender insecurity and increase the likelihood of misinterpreting Islamic knowledge, which may further erode reverts' spiritual confidence. In Guyana, inadequate guidance may prolong the transition process and undermine religious commitment, particularly without the support of familial or cultural reinforcement.

Moreover, additional quantitative analysis in this study further underscores the importance of this issue. A Pearson correlation test demonstrated a moderate positive correlation between reverts' confidence in understanding Islamic teachings and their perception of the positive impact that Islam possessed on their well-being. This result implies that religious literacy supports ritual practices and contributes to the psychological stability and security reverts experienced. Therefore, addressing the knowledge gaps in new reverts' acquisition of Islamic education stands as a foundation in strengthening their spiritual confidence and integration process. The Holy Qurān distinguished the well-informed from the ignorant. Allāh declares:

"Say: Are those who know equal to those who do not know?" (Qurān: 39:9)

For new reverts in Guyana, the pursuit of Islamic knowledge represents not only a practical necessity but also establishes a religious obligation that fortifies reverts' identity and strengthens their resilience against skepticism and external pressures. However, the abundance of conflicting information may be overwhelming to new reverts as they struggle to distinguish between authentic and cultural interpretations, as well as diverse scholarly opinions. The absence of clarity and trustworthiness in the sources of knowledge may obstruct the development of a coherent religious identity and affect reverts' confidence in practicing their faith.

5.2.4.2 Arabic Difficulties. The insufficient Islamic knowledge that participants faced is further compounded by the difficulties they experienced in learning Arabic for reciting the Holy Qurān and prayer supplications. The quantitative findings revealed that this struggle

ranked among the most difficult personal and religious challenges faced by new reverts, underscoring the necessity of resolving this issue. The result suggests that while family tensions or social rejection may be disturbing for reverts, the daily demands of acquiring religious knowledge, including Arabic, present a greater concern for Guyanese reverts.

The acquisition of Arabic enables new Muslims to fulfill their ritual obligations, such as accurately reciting the Holy Qurān and performing the daily prayers. Islamic sources emphasize the importance of reading the Qurān in Arabic, as it is tied to divine guidance and spiritual blessings. Allāh describes the Holy Qurān as an Arabic recitation:

"We have revealed it as a recitation in Arabic that you may understand." (Qurān: 12:2)

Additionally, Arabic provides individuals with access to a repertoire of shared symbols and practices that connect them to a Muslim identity and reinforce communal bonds, such as the declaration of faith, the salutation, and expressions of praise. The feeling of integration and spiritual confidence may be undermined when individuals see themselves as alienated from this linguistic dimension. This view aligns with the observations of Coope (1993) and Forey (2013), who noted that linguistic barriers prolong the adjustment phase.

The insufficient acquisition of Arabic affects reverts' ability to perform their prayers with confidence and may increase their feelings of inadequacy when compared to traditional Muslims. For example, male reverts may be sidelined from leading prayers due to their deficiency in mastering Arabic. Thus, new reverts may feel pressured into learning it at a rapid pace, which may result in anxiety and self-doubt. The fear of being judged by others may lower reverts' confidence and weaken their motivation in curbing this challenge.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) acknowledged varying capacities and struggles individuals faced in learning Arabic. He reassured believers of the merits associated with reciting the Qurān in its original language. He stated:

"The one who is skilled in reciting Qurān will be with the noble, honorable scribes, and the one who recites Qurān and falters therein, and finds it difficult, will have a double reward." (Sahih Muslim, Vol. 2, Hadith 1862)

Therefore, addressing Arabic-related challenges requires initiative that combines linguistic accessibility, spiritual encouragement, and mentorship. Structural support is required for selecting authentic Islamic resources, both offline and online, to enhance the guidance of new Muslims' educational and spiritual development. As such, it raises the importance of beginner-friendly religious education designed at a pace tailored to individual needs rather than collective uniformity. Likewise, it emphasizes the value of Islamic learning programs that are pedagogically adaptable, as reverts begin their religious journey without prior exposure to Arabic.

5.2.4.3 Performing the Daily Prayers. Another religious issue raised in the qualitative data by several participants revealed that perfecting the performance of the five daily prayers remained a challenge. They acknowledged the difficulties in remembering to pray consistently and observing prayers at the specified times. Others noted their desire to learn the correct performance of the Salāh (prayer) and equip themselves with more profound knowledge regarding the spiritual dimensions of the five daily prayers.

This data suggests that religious commitment, such as the Salāh, is not hindered by a lack of faith, but rather by practical and cognitive barriers that may impede reverts' spiritual development. This finding corresponds with the views of Kose (1996) and Rambo (1993), who stated that adjusting to the ritual routine and establishing new habits posed difficulties for reverts. Moreover, Rambo's (1993) conversion model emphasizes that commitment is reinforced through repetition. For this reason, the act of performing the five daily prayers transcends mere religious duty; it serves as a tangible representation of reverts' new personality and requires adjustments in accommodating and balancing daily obligations with religious mandates. Performing the five daily prayers remodels individuals' demeanors and sets them apart from others, physically marking them as different, as they eschew vices and promote virtue.

Allāh mentions:

> "Indeed, prayer forbids indecency and wickedness. And the remembrance of Allāh is of even greater merit." (Qurān: 29:45)

However, reverts' perceptions of not establishing the prayers correctly may generate guilt and self-blame, which may be accompanied by embarrassment. Such emotions may drive reverts to avoid congregational prayers, fearing they may be required to lead the prayers, which may expose their deficiencies in performing them accurately. Hence, the difficulties in mastering the prayers may weaken reverts' confidence and affect their process of integrating into the Muslim community.

As such, Muslim members should not be judgmental of reverts' shortcomings, as changes require gradual steps and ongoing adaptation. A supportive community remains essential in assisting reverts to perform Islamic practices at a sustainable pace, which may reduce feelings of inadequacy and guilt. Moreover, a community that exhibits understanding and compassion would create an atmosphere of trust in which reverts are motivated to persist in their struggles, rather than surrender. Additionally, to alleviate this challenge, the practical application of prayers should be implemented, such as prayer workshops, visually guided resources, and structured religious education. These exercises could be established in various masjids, Islamic institutions, and even in the homes of reverts.

5.2.4.4 Cultural Conflict. Another obstacle that hindered reverts' religious application emerged from cultural conflicts. Over 70% of the respondents registered difficulties in detaching themselves from cultural practices that oppose Islamic teachings. The quantitative and qualitative responses disclosed that adjusting dietary, clothing, and social behavior posed impediments for reverts in maintaining their religious obligations. This finding aligns with Galonnier (2021), who highlighted that the reconfiguration of daily practices that contradict Islamic principles demands reverts to realign ingrained cultural habits with newly adopted values.

Hence, cultural detachment is viewed as a challenge for new Muslims, as it may create sensations of liminality and social dislocation. This dynamic reflects the psychological strain and behavioral shift involved in navigating between two cultural systems, as illustrated in acculturation theory (Sam & Berry, 2010). Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that not all cultural practices conflict with Islamic values, necessitating the need for discernment. The Prophet (peace be upon him) stated:

> "Both legal and illegal things are evident, but in between them there are doubtful (unclear) things, and most of the people have no knowledge about them." (Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol. 1, Hadith 52)

This distinction proves essential for new reverts, as it prevents unwarranted abandonment of acceptable cultural traditions while safeguarding core religious obligations. Therefore, in addressing this cultural conflict, religious leaders and community members should approach reverts' cultural adjustment with patience and awareness by assisting them in distinguishing Islamic requirements from those of Muslim ethnic cultures. Additionally, cultural flexibility may be tolerated for elements that align with Islamic values, and cultural integration guidelines could be offered to new Muslims by long-standing reverts who have successfully managed this obstacle.

5.2.4.5 Marriage. In Islam, marriage epitomizes a social contract and serves as a fundamental institution that promotes stability and enhances physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. As observed by the collected data, several respondents highlighted the difficulties of finding suitable spouses who share their religious values and commitments. This finding corresponds with Mansuri’s (2018) view that pursuing a suitable companion in Islam could be emotionally taxing, especially for those with limited Muslim networks.

In Islam, dating before marriage and free-mixing between the genders without necessity are not permissible. As such, the lack of structured marital support systems within Muslim communities may exacerbate the situation and discourage reverts from seeking potential partners within the faith. Hence, the inability to secure a suitable spouse who shares the same

religious values may undermine new reverts' sense of belonging and weaken their support system. This challenge confirms Kose's (1994) opinion that the journey of transition involves external conflicts, adjusting to new systems, and managing emotional obstacles. Additionally, this challenge transcends the unity of a husband and wife to the family unit, as the absence of a partner with mutual convictions complicates the formation of an Islamic household and the nurturing of children within a faith-oriented environment.

Therefore, to mitigate these challenges, appropriate means should be implemented. For example, Muslim communities may adopt proactive strategies to create institutionalized matchmaking mechanisms. Islamic programs and family-oriented social events may create an atmosphere that facilitates such a channel. This initiative would enhance social networks and strengthen communal solidarity. Additionally, Muslim leaders and social workers could play a pivotal role in legitimizing and coordinating these avenues, aligning them with Islamic values, and responding to the unique needs of reverts.

5.2.5 Social and Cultural Struggles

The social dimension of reversion proves essential in shaping the new identity of reverts. Social struggles, such as rejection, societal judgment, cultural conflict, and inadequate communal support, may hinder or strengthen the journey of reverts in Islam. The coping mechanisms of reverts and the support systems established may determine the outcome of these occurrences.

5.2.5.1 Rejection. The data confirmed that family-related challenges emerged among the most difficult societal struggles encountered by reverts. Several participants associated familial rejection with the experience of being isolated, shunned, or misunderstood by loved ones. This emotional pressure of family rejection almost led one female participant to denounce Islam. Kandhelwi's (2019) narrative demonstrated the physical and psychological torture of Abu Jandal and Musab Ibn Umayr by family members. However, their reliance on the Almighty strengthened their spiritual resilience and assisted them in remaining steadfast in their faith. Thus, familial rejection and the lack of a support system to address this issue

may negatively impact reverts' emotional and religious stability and may lead to psychological distress (Rasip et al., 2025). Without adequate support, the emotional toll on reverts may result in psychological strain, which may hinder their social interactions and the application of Islamic principles.

On the contrary, the findings revealed that participants ranked rejection from the non-Muslim society as the least challenging issue among five others. This result corresponds with the sense of security a large number of participants in this study perceived when expressing their Muslim identity in public. Rejection from non-Muslims in Guyana was not discerned as an imminent threat, unlike in other countries, such as the Philippines and Nigeria (Marodos & Malayang, 2023; Uchendu, 2010). Accepting individuals who have reverted to Islam in Guyana's multicultural environment may facilitate their integration into the society as renewed individuals while affirming their commitment to Islam. This inclusive setting helps alleviate feelings of isolation and encourages social cohesion. However, the tension between family rejection and societal acceptance places reverts in a state of uncertainty, as they struggle with conflicting sources of validation. In private, they face disapproval and insecurity, while in public, they discern assurance and tolerance.

Nevertheless, a multicultural society may mask subtle prejudices and unspoken tensions. For example, when participants were asked about their perceptions of non-Muslim Guyanese attitudes toward their acceptance of Islam, approximately half reported a neutral response, while one-third perceived non-Muslims as generally accepting of their reversion. However, a small number of the participants described encountering hostile behaviors, which should not be overlooked. These experiences demonstrate the discrimination reverts face and the need to acknowledge minority reports of prejudice, which may affect reverts' psychological well-being and sense of belonging.

Furthermore, reverts who have experienced family rejection as well as social animosity may be more susceptible to an increased feeling of alienation, which may discourage them from publicly expressing their religious identity. This concealment, while serving as a coping

mechanism, may intensify the psychological strain of reverts and undermine long-term religious sustainability.

In response to this phenomenon, several supporting measures may be contemplated. For example, community awareness campaigns that clarify misconceptions of Islam and promote interfaith understanding could be adopted in various societies. Legal and advocacy support systems should be available for new reverts who are experiencing discrimination, as well as educational initiatives to inform Muslim leaders, members, and teachers of societal and cultural sensitivities when engaging with new Muslims. Politicians and Muslim communities should adopt a more inclusive approach in developing social assistance programs for reverts, focusing on family-oriented outreach and counseling. In addition, mentorship from other reverts who have experienced similar situations could provide valuable advice that may alleviate the difficulties of new reverts and reinforce a sense of belonging.

5.2.5.2 Public Perception and Social Stigma. Several participants expressed uneasiness about exhibiting their Islamic identity in public. The quantitative and qualitative data confirmed that both male and female reverts experienced discrimination when wearing Islamic attire. However, the findings presented a significant gender disparity, as a substantial number of females (88%) encountered this form of prejudice compared to males. A chi-square test further confirmed this difference as statistically significant, with a p-value of 0.001. Similarly, female reverts in the Philippines and Britain expressed emotions of fear and anxiety about wearing the hijab in public settings (Morados & Malayand, 2023; Alyedreessy, 2016).

Moreover, participants ranked ‘changing old habits’ as the most challenging issue out of five psychological struggles and ‘adapting a new identity’ as the second most challenging. It is highly probable that participants perceived adjusting their dressing habits as a component of these two processes. This assumption is strengthened by the substantial number of responses ‘altering dressing habits’ received when participants were asked to identify elements of their pre-Islamic habits that posed cultural challenges for them after embracing Islam. It should be noted that 31 out of 37 responders in this regard were female. This finding

was reinforced by the qualitative responses, where several females remarked that wearing the hijab posed social and cultural challenges.

The results emphasize that, despite wearing the hijab as an act of personal devotion, female reverts are exposed to judgment and misunderstandings. These societal stigmas could affect reverts' willingness to practice Islam publicly. They could result in compartmentalization of their faith, as observed in Kose's (1994) findings, where British women altered or stopped wearing their headscarves entirely. Furthermore, negative stereotypes may reduce reverts' confidence and intensify their feelings of isolation.

It is important to address these matters by providing community support and public awareness capable of combating these hostile behaviors towards Muslim sisters. Similarly, it is essential to protect their rights to practice their religion without fear of prejudice by enforcing anti-discrimination laws in workplaces, schools, and public institutions. Additionally, Muslim communities could assist new Muslims in adjusting their dressing habits to align with Islamic standards. For example, local masjids and Islamic organizations could provide access to affordable Islamic attire by establishing clothing donation drives or implementing zakat-funded subsidies. Moreover, workshops, Islamic gatherings, and mentorship could be implemented to guide, support, and increase reverts' confidence in their Islamic appearance.

5.2.6 Gender Comparisons

An in-depth analysis of gender disparities indicated that female reverts experience a greater emotional impact on their relationships with loved ones compared to their male counterparts. For example, 21 of the 24 participants represented women, who affirmed that returning to Islam had diminished their ties with family or friends. As observed, only three males encountered strained relationships with loved ones, indicating that seven times more females than men experienced this issue. On the same note, a larger percentage of females than males stated that non-Muslim friends have been unsupportive of their reversion to Islam.

However, when observing participants' responses to their perspectives about public safety in Guyana, a significant number of both genders (79% males and 63% females) disagreed that they felt unsafe expressing their Muslim identity. Additionally, a chi-square goodness-of-fit test corroborated that a significant number of reverts felt safe expressing their religious identity. Nonetheless, the results indicated that a smaller proportion of female reverts felt secure compared to male reverts.

These variances suggest that while both male and female reverts may feel secure in public spaces, females are more affected in their private and public domains than males. Females' interpersonal relationships with loved ones are closely tied to family roles and expectations. Changing their religion may be seen as a betrayal of family traditions; as a consequence, they would face more decisive rejection and pressure. Similarly, females' Islamic identity in public is more noticeable than that of males', making them more susceptible to scrutiny, which may increase their feelings of vulnerability and alienation.

As such, gender-sensitive support systems are essential for confronting these challenges that female reverts encounter privately and in social settings. Support systems that focus on the emotional well-being of reverts, including peer mentoring and family counseling, are vital components in helping them manage these encounters.

5.2.7 Conclusion

The study revealed that, despite the strong spiritual commitment exhibited by new reverts to Islam in Guyana, as well as the educational, emotional, and financial support they acquired from the Muslim community, there remains potential for improvement. The statistical observation highlighted that reverts experienced personal, psychological, religious, social, and cultural challenges, which could affect their transition into Islam and their spiritual development. The results highlighted the need for comprehensive and inclusive support structures that would assist new reverts in their religion and nurture their spiritual, emotional, and social well-being. Additionally, by addressing these needs, policymakers, Muslim

communities, and those in authority would ensure that new reverts in Guyana are empowered with the confidence they need to navigate this journey.

5.3 Originality and Significance

This study serves as a reminder to Muslims that challenges in life are inevitable. Every individual undergoes trials that may or may not be distinct from others. However, the manner in which a person confronts these difficulties illustrates the uniqueness of humanity. The profundity of one's faith and the steadfastness of their patience in times of adversity distinguish a person's character and disposition. Hence, this research represents a unique inquiry into the obstacles faced by reverts to Islam in Guyana, a nation characterized by its exceptional cultural and religious diversity (The World-folio, 2016). Guyanese's distinctive socio-cultural backgrounds influence their religious experiences. Thus, reverts in Guyana confront the difficulties of embracing Islam under peculiar circumstances, such as reconciling their religious identity with ethnic aspirations and aligning Islamic practices with cultural norms.

Despite existing studies and scholarly literature on reverts in various regions of the world, there remains limited information on reverts' experiences in Islam. Henceforth, the challenges encountered by reverts in the Caribbean have not been emphasized. As a result, the issues Guyanese reverts faced are largely unacknowledged in the academic domain. Therefore, this investigation offers a distinct departure from previous studies, as it provides empirical data about reverts in Guyana and their experiences as new Muslims.

This research addresses the gap by exploring the struggles faced by Guyanese reverts to Islam within the sociocultural context of Guyana, where Islam is represented by a minority. The examined areas encompassed the personal, psychological, social, and religious challenges faced by reverts. Consequently, the inquiry observed these issues within the demographics of the individuals, as these specifications highlighted the struggles of distinct groups of reverts. It demonstrated the interactions between religious practices and Guyanese ethnic and cultural norms from the reverts' perspective.

Additionally, the study broadens the discourse on individuals who adopt Islam beyond the usual geographic dimensions with a large Muslim population, illustrating how minority-Muslim inhabitants confront difficulties that arise within the Muslim and non-Muslim societies regarding reverts. By highlighting Guyanese reverts' encounters, this thesis diversifies and decentralizes the academic narrative on individuals returning to Islam, opening avenues to promote the inclusion of Caribbean Muslim reverts whose experiences have long remained underrepresented in scholarly discourse. Identifying these challenges lays the groundwork for further comparative studies across the Caribbean and contributes to an inclusive global discourse on Islam and reversion.

Hence, documenting these challenges may guide masjids, Islamic institutions, Muslim community leaders, and individuals in developing more inclusive programs aimed at strengthening social support structures, fostering compassion among the Muslim population, and preventing the marginalization of new Muslims. Such interventions may enhance the sense of belonging among reverts by enabling them to accept their new religious identity and facilitating their integration process within Muslim communities. In addition, access to such support systems would allow reverts to strengthen their spiritual, social, and psychological development, thereby contributing to the broader cohesion of Guyana's pluralistic Muslim communities.

Similarly, discerning the factors that attract individuals to Islam and the obstacles they encounter after reversion would assist in creating appropriate da'wah strategies that ensure outreach activities are planned with compassion and relevance to address the needs of potential and new reverts. The inclusion of such programs would assist in bridging the gap between traditional Muslims and reverts by facilitating meaningful interaction and mutual understanding between both parties. Subsequently, based on these observations, follow-up strategies and initiatives could be implemented to enhance the growth of reverts in Islam.

In addition, this research may benefit the broader Guyanese community by raising awareness among non-Muslim relatives and friends of reverts about the psychological struggles and social exclusion they encounter due to isolation from loved ones. Furthermore,

it may mitigate the prejudice and marginalization that new Muslims experience within the Muslim community and society at large.

Finally, reverts constitute a significant percentage of the Muslim population in Guyana. They represent the stakeholders who would maintain the teachings and practices of Islam in this region of the world. Consequently, it is imperative that the interests of reverts be adequately handled and their educational advancement firmly enhanced, as their achievements would benefit future generations of Muslims in Guyana and provide a model for others to emulate.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Summary of the Findings

The findings from this research provide a comprehensive overview of the experiences of new reverts to Islam in Guyana, based on quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative information revealed that 79% of the participants described their initial experiences after embracing Islam as very positive or positive, while 86% reported that Islam had positively impacted their self-worth and purpose in life. Moreover, according to 81% of the target group, they felt confident in their comprehension of Islamic beliefs and practices. Thus, a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.329$, $p = 0.006$) was observed between participants' confidence in understanding Islamic teachings and the positive impact Islam had on their lives.

Similarly, a contributing factor that enhanced new reverts' experience was noted by approximately two-thirds of the participants, who stated that the Muslim community was hospitable and supportive of their spiritual development. Likewise, the findings revealed that a significant portion of respondents (69%) felt safe expressing their Muslim identity, as confirmed by a chi-square test showing a statistically significant deviation from a neutral response pattern.

Furthermore, participants highlighted the various challenges they encountered throughout their journey in Islam. 'Changing old habits' was ranked number one among four other psychological struggles, including rejection and isolation. Additionally, respondents ($n = 61$) identified learning to read the Qurān in Arabic as one of the most challenging aspects of embracing Islam. Similarly, 72% of the surveyed population registered difficulties in adjusting their cultural behavior to comply with Islamic principles.

In addition, the survey gathered qualitative data, which complemented the quantitative findings, revealing the spiritual and material elements of reversion. Respondents cited

various reasons for embracing Islam. Several participants mentioned spiritual curiosity, personal experiences, and family influence as motivating factors for their reversion. Other informants expressed additional reasons, such as dissatisfaction with their previous religious beliefs and a profound conviction that Islam appeals to the intellect.

Moreover, participants described the most rewarding aspects of accepting Islam as developing a closeness to Allāh, experiencing inner serenity, and achieving a new level of spirituality and blessings. Others mentioned that Islamic teachings and practices provided a structured framework for guidance and direction. They emphasized that the focus Islam places on unity, discipline, and humility comprises multiple beneficial elements.

Despite experiencing satisfactory aspects of Islam, new reverts in Guyana encountered challenges, such as family rejection, maintaining regular worship, and learning Arabic. Others conveyed difficulty in wearing Islamic attire and facing public judgment when expressing their Islamic identity openly. Participants shared additional struggles they faced, including fasting, access to halal food, economic difficulties, and finding a suitable spouse.

When asked what support they would like to receive from the Muslim community, participants stated that they require "more customized teaching," in addition to emotional and psychological support, especially for women. The desire for spiritual motivation and social inclusion was sought, as well as material and financial assistance.

Furthermore, the vast majority of those surveyed stated that they would not abandon their faith in Islam. However, four females acknowledged that they had encountered doubts due to rejection by family members or mistreatment by other Muslims. Despite such obstacles, these individuals reaffirmed their faith and remained steadfast in their religion. They emphasized the importance of showing compassion, patience, and encouragement towards new reverts in supporting their integration into the Muslim faith and the broader Muslim community.

6.2 Conclusion and Solutions

The findings of this study illuminate the need for establishing supportive structures that extend beyond the initial stage of the Shahādah (testimony of faith). These structures should acknowledge the challenges new reverts to Islam encounter in Guyana and assist them in the transition process. Addressing the observed issues requires individual and communal collaboration in establishing a foundation that collectively encourages the development of new reverts in Islam. Nonetheless, human intervention in any situation remains limited, as the ultimate support in all circumstances originates from the Creator of everything, and believers should consistently depend on Him. Allāh affirms:

وَكَفَىٰ بِرَبِّكَ هَادِيًا وَنَصِيرًا

"Sufficient is your Lord as a Guide and Helper." (Qurān: 25:31)

A sole individual lacks the capacity to withstand trials and tribulations when they occur, owing to the intrinsic weakness of human nature. Allāh mentions:

يُرِيدُ ٱللَّهُ أَن يُخَفِّفَ عَنكُمْ ۚ وَخُلِقَ ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ ضَعِيفًا

And it is Allāh's Will to lighten your burdens, for humankind was created weak (Qurān 4:28).

Thus, in challenging times, individuals, especially believers, depend on and place their trust in the Lord of the heavens and earth to mitigate adverse circumstances. Allāh proclaims to the believers:

وَعَلَى ٱللَّهِ فَتَوَكَّلُوٓا۟ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ

"And put your trust in Allāh if you are ˹truly˺ believers." (Qurān 5: 23)

Consequently, reverts should seek Allāh's assistance and guidance in their challenges. Thereafter, they should adhere to the guidelines manifested by Allāh and His last Messenger to mankind (may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him). Allāh sent him as an example and a role model to be followed. As a result, in the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be

upon him) conduct and lifestyle, there exists the best paradigm to pursue. Allāh, the Almighty, declares:

لَّقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِى رَسُولِ ٱللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ وَٱلْيَوْمَ ٱلْـَٔاخِرَ وَذَكَرَ ٱللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

"Indeed, in the Messenger of Allāh you have an excellent example for whoever has hope in Allāh and the Last Day, and remembers Allāh often." (Qurān: 33:21)

This statement of Allāh asserts that the precedent of the last and final Prophet (peace be upon him) remains one for all humanity to observe and implement, irrespective of their era, location, or nationality. Thus, the methodology of the Prophet (peace be upon him) provides a pragmatic framework for reverts seeking solutions to address the difficulties encountered in Guyana or elsewhere after embracing Islam. His approach with new Muslims emphasized compassion and inclusivity. He recognized their strengths and weaknesses and offered support accordingly.

Furthermore, the Prophet (peace be upon him) left a vast legacy of teachings and practices. Analyzing his way of life uncovers profound guidance that remains relevant and transformative in addressing contemporary challenges. His interactions with new reverts provide numerous examples worth implementing. For instance, the Prophet (peace be upon him) demonstrated his perceptiveness in considering the personal background of those who reverted to Islam. He advised his companions on suitable methods of educating potential and new Muslims. For example, he advised Muʿādh ibn Jabal that the inhabitants of Yemen belonged to the people of Scripture (Christians). He should first invite them back to monotheism prior to teaching them the other pillars of Islam (Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol. 9, Hadith 7372). In addition, the Prophet's (peace be upon him) methodology in this situation exemplified the gradual steps involved in disseminating the knowledge of Islam to newcomers.

Similarly, he acknowledged the skills and abilities of those who had recently reverted to Islam. He said:

"Those who were the best amongst you in the pre-Islamic period are the best amongst you in Islam if they comprehend the religious knowledge." (Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol. 6, Hadith 4689)

Subsequently, he utilized their skills in facilitating the spread of Islam. For example, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) employed the military technique of two new reverts, Khalid bin Al-Waleed and Amr ibn Al-ʻAs, whose contributions to the religion resonate throughout history. Likewise, the leadership status and eloquence of At-Tufayl ibn Amr were recognized by the Prophet (peace be upon him), who utilized his expertise in inviting the Daws tribe to embrace Islam (Hakeem, 2025; Khalid, n.d.). Additionally, Hassān ibn Thābit was identified as a talented poet prior to entering Islam. After he reverted to Islam, the Prophet (peace be upon him) appointed him as his poet, using his poetry to advocate for Islam.

Similarly, reverts entering Islam in Guyana bring with them their personalities, potential, and experiences. Allowing them to be involved in masjid activities and community services would benefit the Muslims and offer new members the opportunity to utilize their skills and knowledge, creating an atmosphere of inclusivity among them.

Moreover, in disseminating Islamic knowledge, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) displayed his wisdom and compassion by imparting new information to the believers and encouraging his companions to follow suit. He instructed Muʿādh ibn Jabal and Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī:

"Facilitate things for the people, and do not make things difficult for them. Be kind and lenient (both of you) with the people…" (Summarized Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 1676)

He recognized the shortcomings in individuals and reprimanded his companions who exhibited harshness in addressing new Muslims. For instance:

A Bedouin (new Muslim) urinated in the mosque, and the people rushed to beat him. Allāh's Messenger ordered them to leave him and pour a bucket or a tumbler (full) of water over the place where he had passed urine. The Prophet then said:

"You have been sent to make things easy (for the people), and you have not been sent to make things difficult for them." (Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol. 8, Hadith 6128)

As such, reverts may proclaim the Shahadah effortlessly. Nevertheless, persisting in the practice of Islam and committing to its tenets brings forth challenges for reverts. As a result, patience and tolerance should be exercised by their advisers and teachers when guiding reverts.

Another strategy implemented by the Prophet (peace be upon him) included mentoring new Muslims and fostering bonds of brotherhood between them and those who were already established in the religion. This strategy assisted the new Muslims in their spiritual and social development. Joining these groups helped eliminate tribalism and encouraged integration and unity. This model of a strong support system was established on the foundation of brotherly love, harmony, and shared responsibilities in times of difficulty and ease. Allāh, the Most Merciful, stipulates that honoring the rights of other believers and fearing Him stand as prerequisites for obtaining His mercy. He mentions:

إِنَّمَا ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا۟ بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ ۚ وَٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

The believers are but one brotherhood, so make peace between your brothers. And be mindful of Allāh so you may be shown mercy. (Qurān: 49:10)

Several reverts have experienced estrangement from family and close acquaintances and may yearn to alleviate their loneliness. At this juncture, reverts seek the support of Muslims to perceive themselves as integral members of the Muslim Ummah (nation). Therefore, creating and facilitating the bonds of brotherhood stands vital in eradicating the challenges of isolation faced by reverts.

The experience of Malcolm X during his journey to Makkah for Hajj reverberates today. He remarks on the closeness he felt in the company of other Muslims. He states:

> Never have I witnessed such sincere hospitality and the overwhelming spirit of true brotherhood as practiced by people of all colors and races here in this Ancient Holy Land, the home of Abraham, Muhammad and all other prophets of the Holy Scriptures. For the past week, I have been utterly speechless and spellbound by the graciousness I see displayed all around me by people of all colors (Malcolm X, 1964, p. 390).

A further important aspect of the Prophet's (peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) mission after individuals returned to Islam focused on establishing an educational environment where new Muslims received structured tutoring on their religious obligations, followed by adhering to the legislative requirements set by the Legislator, Allāh. For example, after receiving the revelation, the Prophet (peace be upon him) assembled the new Muslims in the house of Al-Arqam to teach them about Islam. Thereafter, he assigned teachers to various regions. He sent Musʿab ibn ʿUmair to Yathrib (Madina) before the Hijrah (migration from Makkah to Madina) and Muʿādh ibn Jabal and Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī to Yemen to teach the new reverts the Qurān and fundamentals of Islam (Najeebabadi, 2001).

Similarly, emphasizing Islamic education for new Muslims in Guyana serves as a priority to enhance their spiritual development. Thus, masjid leaders, Islamic organizations and policymakers should incorporate learning opportunities and mentorship programs in the various communities to support reverts in acquiring the fundamentals of Islam.

In conclusion, the significant findings of this study demonstrated that individuals reverting to Islam encounter numerous challenges, such as inadequate religious guidance, societal marginalization, familial conflicts, and insufficient support from organizations and Masjids across Guyana. Therefore, in implementing the methodology of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his companions, whereby numerous lessons and parallels could be extracted and applied in catering to the needs of new Muslims, it is recommended that the Muslim organizations in Guyana collectively establish and execute a coordinated, long-term, proactive support program that would adequately address the challenges encountered by new Muslims. Such a supportive establishment could cater to the needs of potential reverts before,

during, and after reverting to Islam. This program could operate across all regions of Guyana, providing mentorship, fundamental Islamic education, community engagement, and psychological assistance.

For example, prior to individuals reverting to Islam, they could be invited to participate in Islamic programs and practices that assist them in understanding the religion and offer opportunities to interact with Muslims. Following the acceptance of Islam, individuals could be paired with supportive, knowledgeable Muslims who would provide emotional support, assist in clarifying doubts and misconceptions, and facilitate the process of integration within the Muslim community.

Additionally, friendly engagement could be created once a month, where reverts feel comfortable interacting and socializing with other Muslims besides their mentors. Local masjids could conduct weekly or monthly study circles or send assistants from other areas to educate reverts about their new faith. Moreover, through such a program, the number of new reverts could be recorded in the communities, thereby ensuring ongoing follow-up inquiries and visits to these individuals. In addition, counseling programs could be provided that address the psychological and social issues reverts experienced, such as family rejection, identity and cultural adjustment, and forms of discrimination.

On the other hand, observing the strengths and talents of reverts could be advantageous when their potentials are utilized to benefit the Muslim community while creating an atmosphere of importance and inclusiveness for reverts. Furthermore, a branch of this program should be established to evaluate the progress of these individuals and accommodate suggestions for improvement. This procedure could be carried out via monthly meetings and a shared WhatsApp helpline.

6.3 Limitations of this Study

The challenges encountered by new reverts to Islam in Guyana possess layers, and each layer deserves to be explored in detail. Although the findings of this research

offer substantial insights into the difficulties being faced, there exist several limitations that should be acknowledged. The sample size gathered for this study, for instance, is restricted to a percentage of Guyana's entire new revert population. Due to the absence of documented reversion instances, the exact number of reverts in Guyana could not be ascertained at the time of this research.

Despite the number of participants surveyed, which represents a justifiable sample size of 77 individuals, a larger number would have enhanced the validity of the derived conclusions. Consequently, the information collected lies within the subjectivity of these participants' experiences and perspectives. It relies on their narratives and perceptions and may be restricted in representing the broader experiences of new Muslims in Guyana.

Moreover, access to reverts in remote areas was limited, since their participation was confined to the Google Form survey, which was distributed via a WhatsApp link. Unfortunately, logistical constraints made it unfeasible to conduct one-on-one interviews with these individuals to obtain detailed qualitative information. Additionally, several interviewees expressed hesitation in disclosing the emotional depth of their challenges, either out of fear of being stigmatized or to safeguard their privacy.

Similarly, due to the limited timeframe allotted for this thesis, the primary focus was placed on analyzing the difficulties faced by reverts from the adult population, which excluded teenagers and children. Furthermore, there exists a gap in acquiring the perspectives of leaders and members of the Muslim community, as well as Muslim psychologists and sociologists, which would have offered a more comprehensive and multidimensional understanding of the challenges faced by new reverts in Guyana.

Additionally, the methodology employed for gathering data from the participants was restricted to a survey with tailored options and one-on-one interviews, which accumulated qualitative responses. Nevertheless, there exists a lack of longitudinal progression, such as case studies, which would have illustrated how these experiences evolve and what solutions were utilized in curbing the encountered obstacles.

Although a substantial amount of literature exists on challenges reverts encounter after journeying into Islam, there remains a lack of scholarly materials on the experiences and perceptions of reverts entering Islam in the Caribbean and South American regions. As such, this investigation draws parallels from studies conducted in other geographic contexts, which may not fully reflect Guyana's present socio-cultural dynamics and ethnic diversity. On the contrary, the results of this study are specific to Guyana and may not be generalizable to reverts in other countries with different religious, cultural, or societal dynamics.

Despite these limitations, this study aims to serve as a foundation for a more inclusive understanding of revert experiences and to encourage the implementation of appropriate da'wah strategies and programs that would assist in reverts' Islamic development. Moreover, this thesis intends to stimulate further research in this area and expand the discourse surrounding Muslim reverts, especially within Guyana and the wider Caribbean region.

6.4 Recommendations for Further Research

After acknowledging the limitations of this study, several areas emerge that require additional exploration. For instance, future research could target a larger sample size of participants, encompassing the six ethnic groups in Guyana and including respondents from all ten regions. An increase in the population investigated would provide a more comprehensive picture of new reverts' experiences in Islam. Moreover, independent studies could be conducted to establish the struggles of males, females, adolescents, and children

who reverted to Islam, as every individual faces distinct experiences and deserves solitary focus and support.

Similarly, conducting case studies that observe reverts' spiritual, social, and psychological development over a long period would benefit future studies. Following the evolving nature of reverts' challenges and coping mechanisms in areas such as identity struggles and isolation would provide valuable guidance for new Muslims in Guyana. Additionally, comparative studies between reverts and born Muslims could be essential, as they may accentuate the specific needs of both parties and reveal areas where communal support structures could be strengthened or created. Furthermore, comparative studies could examine the differences between male and female reverts or between reverts of different ethnic backgrounds in Guyana. Correspondingly, research comparing the experiences of reverts in Guyana with reverts in other Caribbean or South American countries could be conducted to comprehend regional similarities and differences.

Research could focus on the role of Islamic organizations and institutions in providing guidance, education, and mentorship to reverts. Additionally, studies could be conducted within Islamic organizations and local masjids to determine the number of reverts in Guyana and the percentage of reversion each year. This statistic would showcase the effectiveness of the da'wah strategy, enabling policymakers to assess and enhance outreach initiatives.

Furthermore, this research examined several challenges simultaneously, such as the reverts' personal, psychological, social, and religious experiences. Investigating each issue individually would facilitate a more in-depth understanding of the factors influencing each element, which could lead to more precise and effective support strategies. Similarly, research could be conducted on the economic conditions of reverts before and after accepting Islam, as well as how Islamic financial regulations impact these conditions.

Moreover, exploring the issue of discrimination against reverts in Guyana could uncover social biases and barriers that hinder their integration process and spiritual upliftment. This

information would be advantageous for the development of legislation and community programs, which seek to promote religious tolerance and encourage inclusiveness.

In addition, researchers could explore how individuals who have accepted Islam for ten years or more navigate their interactions with non-Muslim family and friends in private and social circles. Studies could examine the support structure these reverts receive from loved ones and community members in their spiritual and social journey in Islam. These observations could assist in alleviating the psychological stress new Muslims experience while integrating into their new religious identity. Moreover, investigations could analyze to what extent the different schools of thought and sects in Islam affect reverts' applications of Islamic principles and practices.

Future experiments could observe the impact of online platforms and how they influence reverts embracing and practicing Islam. Furthermore, research could explore the significance of digital da'wah and the availability of Islamic knowledge via social media and websites in fostering the Islamic development of reverts. These recommendations could contribute to a holistic and responsive approach when thoroughly examined. This approach would empower and incorporate reverts within the Guyanese Muslim community and surrounding regions.

6.5 Final Remarks

This study explored the multifaceted challenges faced by new reverts to Islam in Guyana. It underscored the personal and societal obstacles new Muslims encountered upon abandoning their previous lifestyle and adopting Islam as their new way of life and religion. Their journey to Islam is marked by psychological, social, and religious struggles. However, despite these hurdles, new reverts demonstrated firmness in remaining on the path of monotheism. The entire population of respondents in this investigation declared their commitment to Islam. Allāh, the Almighty, reassures believers that their tribulations prevail within their ability to endure. He affirms:

لاَ يُكَلِّفُ ٱللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلاَّ وُسْعَهَا

"Allāh does not place on any soul a burden greater than it can bear…" (Qurān: 2:286)

As-Sadi (2018) explains that whatever discomfort a believer encounters lies within his capacity. Allāh, the Creator and the Knower of everything, is aware of the capability of His creation and the firmness of an individual's reliance on Him in times of adversity.

In this context, the story of Salman al-Farisi (may Allāh be pleased with him) offers a powerful historical parallel to contemporary reverts. His journey transitioned from being a privileged, wealthy Zoroastrian in Persia to becoming a devout Muslim slave in Arabia. His path to Islam stands as a timeless testament to the enduring human quest for truth and spiritual fulfillment. He encountered personal, social, and religious upheaval in his quest to embrace Islam. As a consequence, he faced betrayal, enslavement, and cultural barriers.

Nevertheless, he remained resolute in his quest for guidance and unwavering in his commitment. After renouncing Zoroastrianism, he embraced and adhered to the authentic teachings of the Prophet Jesus (Isa—may Allāh's blessings be upon him), which advocate the worship of a single Supreme Being. Eventually, his pursuit led him to follow the doctrines of the Prophet Muhammad (may Allāh's peace and blessings be upon him). His struggles remind believers that reversion seldom follows a linear or comfortable trajectory. It signifies a process characterized by trials that refine and elevate one's faith (Ahmad, 2000).

Hence, it is imperative to acknowledge that the faith of a believer will be tested. Allāh asks a rhetorical question for the believers to ponder upon:

"Do people think once they say: 'We believe,' that they will be left without being put to the test?" (Qurān 29:2)

Therefore, those who perceive their challenges as personal tests of faith, not obstacles, may draw strength from spiritual development and engagement with supportive networks. Such religious and communal enrichment enables reverts to continue on the path of Islam with ease and resilience. As for those who sincerely intend to overcome these difficulties, Allāh promises ease after hardship. He, the Most Merciful, states:

فَإِنَّ مَعَ ٱلْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

"So, surely with hardship comes ease." (Qur'an: 94:5)

As-Sa'di (2018) comments that "this is glad tidings, for every time there is hardship and difficulty, it is accompanied by ease…" (2018, p. 415). This verse provides hope to those experiencing challenges. It reinforces that difficulties would not persist without endings. Therefore, those facing difficulties are encouraged to exercise patience, as Allāh promises relief after hardship. The Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) mentioned:

"Know that there is much good in being patient with what you detest; victory will come with patience, relief will come with affliction, and 'with the hardship will come an ease." (Musnad Aḥmad, Hadith 2803)

The challenges that reverts encounter upon accepting monotheism and adhering to the principles of Islam serve as a process that develops their spiritual and psychological characteristics. This evolution strengthens reverts' Islamic identity in the Muslim community and empowers them to navigate personal and societal pressures. Moreover, Allāh's rewards are registered for every struggle an individual faces in the path of Islam, as He overlooks no hardship or sacrifice. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

"No fatigue, nor disease, nor sorrow, nor sadness, nor hurt, nor distress befalls a Muslim, even if it were the prick he receives from a thorn, but that Allāh expiates some of his sins for it." (Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol. 7, Hadith 5641).

The Prophet (peace be upon) further stated:

"If Allāh intends good for someone, then He afflicts him with trials." (Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol. 7, Hadith 5645).

Imaam Al Bukahri mentions that "the people most prone to trials are Prophets, and then the most pious, and then the less pious, and so on" (Khan, 1997, p. 309).

Therefore, every trial believers face is regarded as an expiation of a sin or an elevation that takes them closer to their Creator. May this research enlighten stakeholders about the

experiences of reverts who have embraced Islam, and may it inspire more substantial support from individuals and Muslim communities. This study intends to foster greater empathy, awareness, and inclusion among all Muslims.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Survey on Challenges of Reverts to Islam in Guyana

This survey examines the experiences of reverts to Islam, including challenges faced, community support, and societal perceptions. Your responses will remain anonymous and will be used to improve support systems for reverts.

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female	4. Region of Residence in Guyana: ……	
2. Age: ☐ 18 - 35 years ☐ 36 - 45years ☐ 46 and over years	5. The number of years you revert to Islam? ☐ Less than 1 year ☐ 1–3 years ☐ 4–7 years ☐ 7- 10 years	7. Economic Status: ☐ Unemployed ☐ Below average ☐ Average ☐ Above average
3. Ethnicity: ☐Afro-Guyanese ☐ Mixed Race ☐Indo-Guyanese ☐ Indigenous ☐ Other	6. What was your pervious religion? ☐ Christianity ☐ Other ☐ Hinduism ☐ None	

1. What inspired you to join the Muslim faith? (Tick all that apply) ☐ Personal spiritual journey ☐ Influence from friends/family ☐ Marriage ☐ Curiosity about the religion ☐Other (please specify): ……..……	2. Your initial experience when you reverted to Islam was …….. ☐ Very positive ☐ Positive ☐ Neutral ☐ Negative ☐ Very negative

Section 2: Initial Experience Reverting to Islam

On a scale of 1-5, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree about the following statements:

1 - Strongly Agree	2 - Agree	3 - Neutral	4 - Disagree	5 - Strongly Disagree

	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
3	I feel welcomed by the local Muslim community.					
4	The Muslim community has provided adequate support for my spiritual growth.					

5. What type of support have you received from the Muslim community? (Tick all that apply)

□ Education about Islam (e.g., classes, mentoring).
□ Emotional support
□ Financial support
□ None

Section 3: Personal / Religious Challenges

1. Which of the following **challenges** did you encounter after reverting? (Tick all that apply)
□ Conflicts with family members
□ Taking a Muslim name
□ Difficulty learning religious practices (e.g. Salaah)
□ Difficulty learning to read the Qurān in Arabic
□ Struggle adjusting to new dietary restrictions (e.g., halal food)
□ Balancing Islamic obligations with work/study/ social lifestyle
Please describe any other personal challenges you faced: ……

On a scale of 1-5, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree about the following statements:

1 - Strongly Agree	2 - Agree	3 - Neutral	4 - Disagree	5 - Strongly Disagree

	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
2	I am confident in my understanding of Islamic teachings and practices.					
3	I often feel isolated from my previous social circle since reverting to Islam.					
4	Accepting Islam has positively impacted my overall sense of self-worth and purpose.					
5	I feel overwhelmed by the amount of new information I need to learn about Islam.					

Section 4: Psychological Challenges

On a scale of 1-5 how would you grade the following challenges 1 (most challenging) to 5 (least challenging).

	Statements	**1-5**
1	Adapting a new identity	
2	Rejection from non-Muslims	
3	Isolation from family, friends or the Muslim society	
4	Managing stress from learning the new religion	
5	Changing old habits	

Section 5: Societal Challenges / Discrimination

1. How would you describe the attitude of the non-Muslim Guyanese society toward your reversion to Islam? ☐ Accepting ☐ Neutral ☐ Hostile	2. Have you encountered discrimination wearing Islamic attire (hijab, kufi, thoub etc.)? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not applicable

On a scale of 1-5, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree about the following statements:

1 - Strongly	2 - Agree	3 - Neutral	4 - Disagree	5 - Strongly Disagree

	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
3	Reverting to Islam has weakened my relationships with family or friends.					
4	Non-Muslim friends have not been understanding and supportive of my reversion					
5	I don't feel safe expressing my Muslim identity in public settings.					

Section 6: Cultural Challenges

1. Have you faced challenges changing your cultural practices that contradict Islamic teachings?

☐ Yes. ☐ No

2. If yes, which aspects were challenging? (Tick all that apply)

☐ Festivals and celebrations ☐ Dressing habits ☐ Other (please specify):
☐ Traditional food ☐ Social activities ……

Section 7: General Reflections

1. What do you find most rewarding about your journey as a Muslim?

……

2. What has been your biggest challenge since your reversion to Islam?

……

3. What type of support would you like to see from the Muslim community?

……..

4. Have you ever considered leaving Islam? …….

If yes, why?……

Thank you very much for your kind support.

Appendix 2

Interview Questions

Gender: Age: Ethnicity: How long have you reverted to Islam:

- What caused you to accept Islam?
- How long did you think about Islam before accepting it?
- Did you follow a religion before accepting Islam? What was it?
- Do you believe that your previous religion helps you with following Islamic practices? How?
- Did you have any doubts before saying the shahada? Could you explain?
- What do you love most about being a Muslim? / What brought you the most peace after entering Islam?
- How would you describe your feelings after you accepted Islam for a couple of months? Why did you feel so?
- What was the reaction of your family and friends after they found out you accept Islam?
- What was most challenging for you after you became a Muslim, and how did you deal with it?
- What difficulties do you have with Islamic practices at home and in public?
- Where are you getting Islamic knowledge from? What do you think about learning Arabic to pray and read the Qurān?
- What do you think about the Muslim community in supporting your acceptance of Islam?
- Who helped you with the difficulties you faced after you became a Muslim?
- What can the Muslim community do better to support reverts?
- How did the non-Muslim community react after you accepted Islam?
- After you become a Muslim, how did it affect you in taking part in non-Muslim holidays and gatherings?
- Did you ever think about leaving Islam? Why? Or do you know anyone who left Islam? Could you say why?
- What do you want people to understand about reverts?
- What advice would you give to new reverts?
- Is there anything else you would like to say about your reversion to Islam? If yes, please state.

Thank you very much for answering these questions.
May Allāh reward you tremendously. Ameen.